May-June 2005

The Good News

A MAGAZINE OF UNDERSTANDING

DNA

The Tiny Code That's Toppling Evolution

What Do DNA Discoveries Mean for Evolution? • God's Challenge to You
John Paul II's Impact on the World • Where Is the Europe-U.S. Divide Leading?

Intelligent Design

In our last issue, we reported in our new feature "God, Science and the Bible" on British philosophy professor Antony Flew, considered the world's best-known atheist, bowing to mounting scientific evidence proving the existence of God.

Flew said his current ideas are similar to those of American "intelligent design" (ID) theorists, who see evidence for an intelligent guiding force in the universe's construction.

Frankly, the evidence for creation is all around us. It always has been. As the apostle Paul said about even ungodly people: ". . . What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse" (Romans 1:19-20, New International Version).

King David tells us, "The *fool* has said in his heart, 'There is no

Frankly, the evidence for creation is all around us. It always has been.

God'" (Psalms 14:1; 53:1, emphasis added). As evidence, David gazed up at the awesome grandeur of the heavens (Psalm 19:1). He also looked to the complexity of his own body: "You formed my inward parts . . . I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works . . ." (Psalm 139:13-14).

Yet David in his ancient context had no idea just how marvelous. Modern microbiology has revealed an unimaginable complexity beyond human ingenuity.

A couple of years ago, I saw a program airing on PBS that amazed me. Titled *Unlocking the Mystery of Life: The Scientific Case for Intelligent Design,* it is a "must see" (available through IllustraMedia .com and Amazon.com). Featuring ID scientists such as Michael Behe, who is interviewed in this issue of *The Good News,* the evidence it presents is startling.

When you observe the bacterial flagellar motor and the protein assembly plants with machines that transport the building blocks of life to where the assembly instructions demand, you will believe! This is biochemical nanotechnology—microscopic robots and manufacturing at the subcellular level. How could this have arisen by chance?

And then there are the assembly instructions themselves—encoded in the informational *language* of DNA. It is far and away the most brilliant computer code ever written. We are now only beginning to comprehend it. How could it have written itself through mindless chemistry? Antony Flew explained that his newfound belief in God is based on developments in DNA research.

Flew, however, is quick to add that his view of God is certainly not akin to the biblical one. He sees God as merely a "First Cause" who does not intervene in creation. If there is a cosmic purpose, in Flew's conception it is unrelated to the human individual. He still does not believe in any kind of revealed religion or life after death.

Yet the mere fact that someone of Flew's stature has reversed his position may mark the beginning of a sea change. Perhaps others who've held the same views will examine the evidence and do the same. And some may go further—to ponder the possibility that if there is a Creator, He may have more in mind for each of us personally—and that perhaps He has indeed chosen to reveal Himself to us and provide us with explanations and directions for life.

This is what *The Good News* is all about.

—Tom Robinson, Senior writer

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Table of **Contents**

DNA discoveries challenge evolution **4**

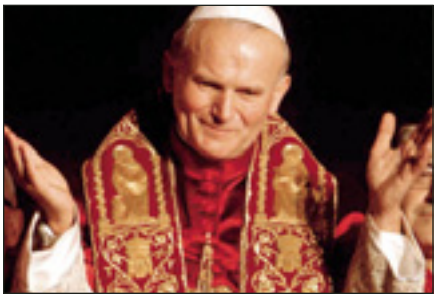
Cover Feature

DNA: The Tiny Code That's Toppling Evolution

As scientists explore the universe inside the cell, they are making startling discoveries of information systems more complex than anything ever devised by humanity's best minds. How did they get there? Who or what designed them? Could they have developed by accident? What are the implications for the theory of evolution? **4**

What Do DNA Discoveries Mean for Evolution?

The Good News *interviews Dr. Michael Behe, author of the 1996 best seller* Darwin's Black Box *and professor of biochemistry, on how discoveries at the cellular level present a challenge to Darwinian evolution.* **8**



A pope who powerfully influenced Europe **17**

God's Challenge to You

During the great age of exploration, visionary men sailed uncharted waters and discovered new lands. Today God issues a great challenge to each of us. Are you willing to take Him up on His challenge to you? **10**

Where Is the Europe-U.S. Divide Leading?

Europe's dreams of challenging U.S. dominance are now coming to fruition in the European Union. Three recent books help us understand European thinking and resentment toward the United States. **14**

Death of a Titan: John Paul II's Impact on the World

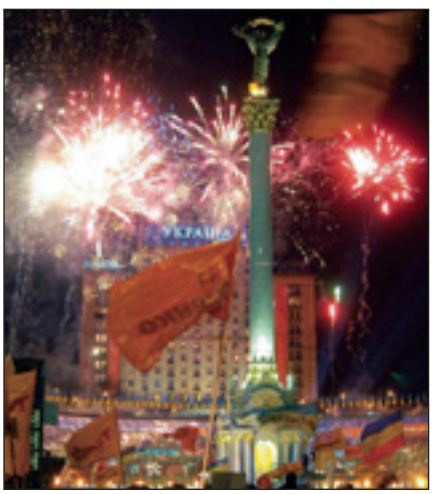
John Paul II not only saw Eastern Europe freed from the shackles of communism and the European Union coming together to form a potential new superpower—he personally impacted these events. **17**

Who Determines Right From Wrong?

It's ironic that while court battles are being waged over posting the Ten Commandments in schools and government buildings, many Christians believe these laws have no application to modern Christianity. **23**

The Spread of Freedom: Foretaste for the Entire World?

In recent months we've witnessed a trend away from oppression and toward freedom in some countries. Encouraging though this is, it doesn't compare with what God has in store for the entire world! **25**



Spread of freedom a cause for celebration **25**

Regular Features

God, Science and the Bible *News from the world of science about God and the Bible* **12**

World News and Trends *An overview of conditions around the world* **20**

Television and Radio Log *Station listings and times for* Good News/Tomorrow TV *and* GN Radio **22**

Letters From Our Readers *Readers of* The Good News *share their thoughts* **28**

Questions and Answers *Answers to readers' questions* **29**

Just for Youth *Do You Choose Happiness?* **30**

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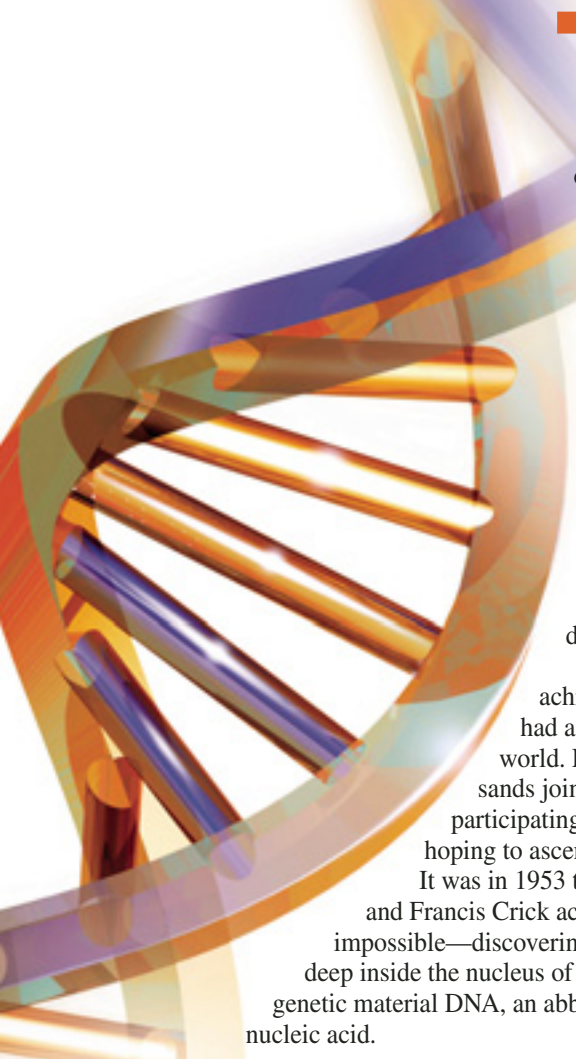
DNA: The Tiny Code That's Toppling Evolution

As scientists explore a new universe—the universe inside the cell—they are making startling discoveries of information systems more complex than anything ever devised by humanity's best minds. How did they get there, and what does it mean for the theory of evolution?

by Mario Seiglie



Two great achievements occurred in 1953, more than half a century ago. The first was the successful ascent of Mt. Everest, the highest mountain in the world. Sir Edmund Hillary and his guide, Tenzing Norgay, reached the summit that year, an accomplishment that's still considered the ultimate feat for mountain climbers. Since then, more than a thousand mountaineers have made it to the top, and each year hundreds more attempt it.

Yet the second great achievement of 1953 has had a greater impact on the world. Each year, many thousands join the ranks of those participating in this accomplishment, hoping to ascend to fame and fortune.

It was in 1953 that James Watson and Francis Crick achieved what appeared impossible—discovering the genetic structure deep inside the nucleus of our cells. We call this genetic material DNA, an abbreviation for deoxyribonucleic acid.

Who or what could miniaturize such information and place this enormous number of "letters" in their proper sequence as a genetic instruction manual? Could evolution have gradually come up with a system like this?

The discovery of the double-helix structure of the DNA molecule opened the floodgates for scientists to examine the code embedded within it. Now, more than half a century after the initial discovery, the DNA code has been deciphered—although many of its elements are still not well understood.

What has been found has profound implications regarding Darwinian evolution, the theory taught in schools all over the world that all living beings have evolved by natural processes through mutation and natural selection.

Amazing revelations about DNA

As scientists began to decode the human DNA molecule, they found something quite unexpected—an exquisite "language" composed of some *3 billion genetic letters.* "One of the most extraordinary discoveries of the twentieth century," says Dr. Stephen Meyer, director of the Center for Science and Culture at the Discovery Institute in Seattle, Wash., "was that DNA actually stores information—the detailed instructions for assembling proteins—in the form of a four-character digital code" (quoted by Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator,* 2004, p. 224).

It is hard to fathom, but the amount of information in human DNA is roughly equivalent to 12 sets of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*—an incredible *384* volumes' worth of detailed information that would fill 48 feet of library shelves!

Yet in their actual size—which is only two millionths of a millimeter thick—a teaspoon of DNA, according to molecular biologist Michael Denton, could contain *all* the information needed to build the proteins for *all* the species of organisms that have ever lived on the earth, and "there would still be enough room left for all the information in every book ever written" (*Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, 1996, p. 334).

Who or what could miniaturize such information and place this enormous number of "letters" in their proper sequence as a genetic instruction manual? Could evolution have gradually come up with a system like this?

DNA contains a genetic language

Let's first consider some of the characteristics of this genetic "language." For it to be rightly called a language, it must contain the following elements: an alphabet or coding system, correct spelling, grammar (a proper arrangement of the words), meaning (semantics) and an intended purpose.

Scientists have found the genetic code has all of these key elements. "The coding regions of DNA," explains Dr. Stephen Meyer, "have *exactly* the same relevant properties as a computer code or language" (quoted by Strobel, p. 237, emphasis in original).

The only other codes found to be true languages are all of human origin. Although we do find that dogs bark when they perceive danger, bees dance to point other bees to a

Illustration by Shaun Venish/Nick Slaughter

source and whales emit sounds, to name a few examples of other species' communication, none of these have the composition of a language. They are only considered low-level communication signals.

The only types of communication considered high-level are human languages, artificial languages such as computer and Morse codes and the genetic code. No other communication system has been found to contain the basic characteristics of a language.

energy can *carry* information, but they are not the same as *information itself.*

For instance, a book such as Homer's *Iliad* contains information, but is the physical book itself information? No, the materials of the book—the paper, ink and glue contain the contents, but they are only a *means* of transporting it.

If the information in the book was spoken aloud, written in chalk or electronically reproduced in a computer, the information does not suffer qualitatively from the message" (quoted by Johnson, p. 70).

Professor Werner Gitt's conclusions from the information found in DNA

In his book *In the Beginning Was Information,* Dr. Werner Gitt, an expert in information systems, deduces certain conclusions from the information found in DNA. Here is a summary:

- Since the DNA code has all the essential characteristics of information, there must have been *a sender* of this information.
- Since the density and complexity of the DNA information is millions of times greater than man's present technology, the sender must be *supremely intelligent.*
- Since the sender must have encoded (stored) the information into the DNA molecule and constructed the molecular biomachines to encode, decode and run the cells, the sender must be *purposeful and supremely powerful.*
- Since information is a nonmaterial entity and cannot originate from matter, the sender must have a *nonmaterial component* (*spirit*).
- Since information cannot originate from matter and is also created by man, man's nature must have a *nonmaterial component* (*spirit*).
- Since biological information can only originate from an intelligent sender and all theories of chemical and biological evolution are based on the premise that information comes solely from matter and energy (with no sender), then the theories of chemical and biological evolution are *false.*

It is hard to fathom, but the amount of information in human DNA is roughly equivalent to 12 sets of *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*—an incredible *384* volumes' worth of detailed information that would fill 48 feet of library shelves!

Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, commented that "DNA is like a software program, only much more complex than anything we've ever devised."

Can you imagine something more intricate than the most complex program running on a supercomputer being devised *by accident* through evolution—no matter how much time, how many mutations and how much natural selection are taken into account?

DNA language not the same as DNA molecule

Recent studies in information theory have come up with some astounding conclusions—namely, that information cannot be considered in the same category as matter and energy. It's true that matter or

means of transporting it. "In fact the content of the message," says professor Phillip Johnson, "is independent of the physical makeup of the medium" (*Defeating Darwinism by Opening Minds*, 1997, p. 71).

The same principle is found in the genetic code. The DNA molecule *carries* the genetic language, but the language itself is *independent* of its carrier. The same genetic information can be written in a book, stored in a compact disk or sent over the Internet, and yet the quality or content of the message has not changed by changing the means of conveying it.

As George Williams puts it: "The gene is a package of information, not an object. The pattern of base pairs in a DNA molecule specifies the gene. But the DNA molecule is the medium, it's not the

Information from an intelligent source

In addition, this type of high-level information has been found to originate only from an intelligent source.

As Lee Strobel explains: "The data at the core of life is not disorganized, it's not simply orderly like salt crystals, but it's complex and specific information that can accomplish a bewildering task—the building of biological machines that far outstrip human technological capabilities" (p. 244).

For instance, the precision of this genetic language is such that the average mistake that is not caught turns out to be *one error per 10 billion letters.* If a mistake occurs in one of the most significant parts of the code, which is in the genes, it can cause a disease such as sickle-cell anemia. Yet even the best and most intelligent typist in the world couldn't come close to making only one mistake per 10 billion letters—far from it.

So to believe that the genetic code gradually evolved in Darwinian style would break all the known rules of how matter, energy and the laws of nature work. In fact, there has not been found in nature any example of one information system inside the cell gradually evolving into another functional information program.

Michael Behe, a biochemist and professor at Pennsylvania's Lehigh University, explains that genetic information is primarily an instruction manual and gives some examples.

He writes: "Consider a step-by-step list of [genetic] instructions. A mutation is a change in *one* of the lines of instructions. So instead of saying, 'Take a ¼-inch nut,' a mutation might say, 'Take a ⅜-inch nut.' Or instead of 'Place the round peg in the round hole,' we might get 'Place the round peg in the square hole' . . . What a mutation *cannot* do is change all the instructions in one step—say, [providing instructions] to build a fax machine instead of a radio" (*Darwin's Black Box*, 1996, p. 41).

We therefore have in the genetic code an immensely complex instruction manual that has been majestically designed by a more intelligent source than human beings.

Even one of the discoverers of the genetic code, the agnostic and recently deceased Francis Crick, after decades of work on deciphering it, admitted that "an honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, *the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle,* so many

are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going" (*Life Itself*, 1981, p. 88, emphasis added).

Evolution fails to provide answers

It is good to remember that, in spite of all the efforts of all the scientific laboratories around the world working over many decades, they have not been able to produce so much as a single human hair. How much more difficult is it to produce an entire body consisting of some 100 trillion cells!

Up to now, Darwinian evolutionists could try to counter their detractors with some possible explanations for the complexity of life. But now they have to face the information dilemma: How can meaningful, precise information be *created by accident*—by mutation and natural selection? None of these contain the mechanism of *intelligence,* a requirement for creating complex information such as that found in the genetic code.

Darwinian evolution is still taught in most schools as though it were fact. But it is increasingly being found wanting by a growing number of scientists. "As recently as twenty-five years ago," says former atheist Patrick Glynn, "a reasonable person weighing the purely scientific evidence on the issue would likely have come down on the side of skepticism [regarding a Creator]. That is no longer the case." He adds: "Today the concrete data point strongly in the direction of the God hypothesis. It is the simplest and most obvious solution . . ." (*God: The Evidence*, 1997, pp. 54-55, 53).

Quality of genetic information the same

Evolution tells us that through chance mutations and natural selection, living things evolve. Yet to evolve means to gradually change certain aspects of some living thing until it becomes another type of creature, and this can only be done by changing the genetic information.

So what do we find about the genetic code? The same basic quality of information exists in a humble bacteria or a plant as in a person. A bacterium has a shorter genetic code, but qualitatively it gives instructions as precisely and exquisitely as that of a human being. We find the same prerequisites of a language—alphabet, grammar and semantics—in simple bacteria and algae as in man.

Each cell with genetic information, from bacteria to man, according to molecular biologist Michael Denton, consists of "artificial languages and their decoding systems, memory banks for information storage and retrieval, elegant control systems regulating the automated assembly of parts and components, error fail-safe and proof-reading devices utilized for quality control, assembly processes involving the principle of prefabrication and modular construction . . . [and a] capacity not equalled in any of our most advanced machines, for it would be capable of replicating its entire structure within a matter of a few hours" (Denton, p. 329).

So how could the genetic information of bacteria gradually evolve into information for another type of being, when only one or a few minor mistakes in the millions of letters in that bacterium's DNA can kill it?

Again, evolutionists are uncharacteristically silent on the subject. They don't even have a working hypothesis about it. Lee Strobel writes: "The six feet of DNA coiled inside every one of our body's one hundred trillion cells contains a four-letter chemical alphabet that spells out precise assembly instructions for all the proteins from which our bodies are made . . . No hypothesis has come close to explaining how information got into biological matter by naturalistic means" (Strobel, p. 282).

Up to now, Darwinian evolutionists could try to counter their detractors with some possible explanations for the complexity of life. But now they have to face the information dilemma.

Werner Gitt, professor of information systems, puts it succinctly: "The basic flaw of all evolutionary views is the origin of the information in living beings. It has never been shown that a coding system and semantic information could originate by itself [through matter] . . . The information theorems predict that this will never be possible. A purely material origin of life is thus [ruled out]" (Gitt, p. 124).

The clincher

Besides all the evidence we have covered for the intelligent design of DNA information, there is still one amazing fact remaining—the ideal number of genetic letters in the DNA code for storage and translation.

Moreover, the copying mechanism of DNA, to meet maximum effectiveness, requires the number of letters in each word to be an even number. Of all possible mathematical combinations, the ideal number for storage and transcription has been calculated to be four letters.

This is exactly what has been found in the genes of every living thing on earth—a four-letter digital code. As Werner Gitt states: "The coding system used for living beings is optimal from an engineering standpoint. This fact strengthens the argument that it was a case of purposeful design rather that a [lucky] chance" (Gitt, p. 95).

More witnesses

Back in Darwin's day, when his book *On the Origin of Species* was published in 1859, life appeared much simpler. Viewed through the primitive microscopes of the day, the cell appeared to be but a simple blob of jelly or uncomplicated protoplasm. Now, almost 150 years later, that view has changed dramatically as science has discovered a virtual universe inside the cell.

"It was once expected," writes Professor Behe, "that the basis of life would be exceedingly simple. That expectation has been smashed. Vision, motion, and other biological functions have proven to be no less sophisticated than television cameras and automobiles. Science has made enormous progress in understanding how the chemistry of life works, but the elegance and complexity of biological systems at the molecular level have paralyzed science's attempt to explain their origins" (Behe, p. x).

Dr. Meyer considers the recent discoveries about DNA as the Achilles' heel of evolutionary theory. He observes: "Evolutionists are still trying to apply Darwin's nineteenth-century thinking to a twenty-first century reality, and it's not working . . . I think the information revolution taking

Photos (from left): Corel Professional Photos, PhotoDisc

place in biology is sounding the death knell for Darwinism and chemical evolutionary theories" (quoted by Strobel, p. 243).

Dr. Meyer's conclusion? "I believe that the testimony of science *supports* theism. While there will always be points of tension or unresolved conflict, the major developments in science in the past five decades have been running in a strongly theistic direction" (ibid., p. 77).

Dean Kenyon, a biology professor who repudiated his earlier book on Darwinian evolution—mostly due to the discoveries of the information found in DNA—states: "This new realm of molecular genetics (is) where we see the most compelling evidence of design on the Earth" (ibid., p. 221).

Just recently, one of the world's most famous atheists, Professor Antony Flew, admitted he couldn't explain how DNA was created and developed through evolution. He now accepts the need for an intelligent source to have been involved in the making of the DNA code.

"What I think the DNA material has done is show that intelligence must have been involved in getting these extraordinary diverse elements together," he said (quoted by Richard Ostling, "Leading Atheist Now Believes in God," Associated Press report, Dec. 9, 2004).

"Fearfully and wonderfully made"

Although written thousands of years ago, King David's words about our marvelous human bodies still ring true. He wrote: "For You formed my inward parts, You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, *for I am fearfully and wonderfully made* . . . My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and *skillfully wrought* . . ." (Psalm 139:13-15, emphasis added).

Where does all this leave evolution? Michael Denton, an agnostic scientist, concludes: "Ultimately the Darwinian theory of evolution is no more nor less than the great cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century" (Denton, p. 358).

All of this has enormous implications for our society and culture. Professor Johnson makes this clear when he states: "Every history of the twentieth century lists three thinkers as preeminent in influence: Darwin, Marx and Freud. All three were regarded as 'scientific' (and hence far more reliable than anything 'religious') in their heyday.

"Yet Marx and Freud have fallen, and even their dwindling bands of followers no longer claim that their insights were based on any methodology remotely comparable to that of experimental science. I am convinced that Darwin is next on the block. His fall will be by far the mightiest of the three" (Johnson, p. 113).

Now, almost 150 years after Darwin published *On the Origin of Species*, the view of the cell has changed dramatically as science has discovered a virtual universe inside the cell.

Evolution has had its run for almost 150 years in the schools and universities and in the press. But now, with the discovery of what the DNA code is all about, the complexity of the cell, and the fact that information is something vastly different from matter and energy, evolution can no longer dodge the ultimate outcome. The evidence certainly points to a resounding checkmate for evolution! ***GN***

Recommended Reading

What's the truth about evolution? Schools routinely teach Darwinian evolution as fact. News reports regularly remark on discoveries that "prove" evolution. But do you know the other side of the story? We've prepared two full-color booklets that address many of the facts—and fallacies—regarding evolution. Request or download your free copies of *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?* and *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*

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A *Good News* Interview With

Michael Behe, Ph.D.

What Do DNA Discoveries Mean for Evolution?

Interview by Mario Seiglie

The Good News: As a professor of biochemistry, what made you question Darwin's theory of evolution?

Michael Behe: I used to believe in Darwin's theory because I was taught it in high school and college. I'm now a biochemist, and when you study biochemistry you study very complicated molecular systems that are the basis of the cell and the foundation of life. Many times I would wonder how something that complicated could have evolved by a step-by-step Darwinian process. But I tried to shrug off the doubts.

GN: What happened then?

MB: In the late 1980s, when I was an associate professor of biochemistry, I read the book *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* by a geneticist, Michael Denton. And in it, Denton presented a number of arguments against the Darwinian theory that I thought were good arguments and that I had never heard of before. I became angry because here I was a professor of science at a leading university and had never heard these criticisms, let alone how to answer them. I became angry because I had been led to believe in the Darwinian theory, not because the evidence was compelling, but because that's what I was expected to believe.

GN: What did you do?

MB: After reading Denton's book, I decided to go to the science library and look at the science journals to see who had explained the complicated cellular systems by a Darwinian process. I was astounded to find there were no published papers, or none to speak of, that even *tried* to explain how a step-by-step process could produce such complexity. At that point I figured a new idea was needed and so I started to think more about alternatives.

GN: You often speak of "molecular machines." In the molecular world, are all structures of life made up of molecular machines?

MB: Many things in the cells are molecular machines. Quite literally they are machines made of molecules—that is, they have gears, screws and bolts. There are things like little molecular trucks that will walk along highways and there are little traffic signs and so on.

But not everything in the cell is a machine. Some things are fuel—they *fuel* the machines. There are things like bricks and cement that hold structures together. I wouldn't call these machines. They are part of the building itself. But the interesting part of the cell is it's really an elegant machine.

GN: What are some of your favorite examples of these molecular machines?

MB: My favorite examples are those that remind us of the machines in our everyday world. Perhaps my all-time favorite is the bacterial flagellum, which is quite literally an outboard motor that bacteria use to swim. It's just like putting an outboard motor on a boat to go through the water. Instead of using gasoline, it uses a flow of acid from one side of the cell to the other.

There are nuts and bolts that hold the pieces together, and a hook region that is actually a universal joint allowing the drive shaft and the propeller to turn. There is an anchor called a stater, which holds the structure onto the cell wall and allows it to stay in place while the propeller turns.

When I show the picture of this structure, people ask if this is a machine NASA designed or if it comes from an engineering journal. When I tell them it's a biological structure found in the cell, they quickly grasp that these things do not look like they were put together by random Darwinian processes—rather that they were designed.

GN: What is another striking example?

MB: The network for moving supplies from one side of the cell to another. Things have to be carried and put on little molecular trucks. They have to know what direction to take, their destination, when to get there and what to load, much like UPS or FedEx does. There are literally trucks and highways and signs and many other things necessary for things to work.

GN: Are Darwin's ideas bad science?

MB: It depends on what you mean by bad science. Good ideas and promising ideas are good science, even if they turn out to be wrong in the end—but they are good science nonetheless. I think Darwin's idea was a good idea. It looked like it might have a chance when he proposed it. But even when he proposed it in 1859 there were problems with it, as he admitted.

The assumption when he published his idea was that the foundation of life was simple. Cells were simple little things like jelly and protoplasm. Maybe as he knew more and more about this simpler foundation of life, he would see how the simplicity would give rise to the complexity that we saw in organisms such as legs, eyes and ears.

It was a good idea, but it turned out to be incorrect. As science progressed and we learned more about life, we saw inexorably that it was not complexity at the top and simplicity underneath, but it was complexity at the top, and *more* complexity underneath.

We learned the cell is not a simple blob of jelly. It has these molecular machines in it. It has a sophisticated mechanism that man has not been able to reproduce. And much of it is what I call irreducibly complex,

Dr. Michael Behe, author of the 1996 best seller *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution,* is a professor of biochemistry at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

After graduating from Drexel University in 1974 with a B.S. in chemistry, Dr. Behe did his graduate studies in biochemistry at the University of Pennsylvania and was awarded his Ph.D. in 1978.

From 1982-85 he taught chemistry at Queens College in New York City, and since 1985 he has taught at Lehigh University. In addition to his book, Dr. Behe has penned more than 40 technical papers. He lives near Bethlehem with his wife and nine children.

so that if you take one part away from the machine, the machine will break down, just as you can take a couple of spark plugs from a car and it will not work. Things will break down in the cell as well.

These things haven't been explained by Darwinian theory in any journal article, and there's good reason to think that, in principle, they *can't* be explained by Darwinian theory.

So Darwin's idea, now viewed in retrospect, has a much more limited range of application. Darwinian evolution can really explain when an organism has a slight change that might favor it—natural selection can explain that. For example, how a polar bear might have arisen from a brown bear. It can explain insecticide resistance in insects and so on. So it can explain little changes, but it's the big things in life that it has trouble explaining.

"As we discover more about the cell, at every turn we find it is far more sophisticated, more elegant and more complicated than we ever thought, and that trend is not decreasing."

GN: What do you mean when you say something is irreducibly complex, and how does that fit with Darwinian evolution?

MB: It sounds like a fancy word, but it is really a simple idea. It means you have a machine or some organization or system that has a number of different components that act on one another or push against each other. The result is that they perform some action that the parts themselves couldn't do, and if you take one of the parts away the system breaks down because you need all the parts for it to work.

An example is a mousetrap. Usually it has a wooden base, a spring, a hammer, an arm and a catch. If you take one of the parts out, it doesn't work and you can't catch mice.

It is very hard to see how you could fit something like this mousetrap in a step-by-step process, where each step does a job and improves the system. And that's the way Darwinian evolution has to work. It has to work by having some system that is already functioning, and natural selection trying to improve it slowly into a better system.

But with a mousetrap, if you started with a wooden platform, that wouldn't catch any mice. Natural selection would have no reason to keep that. Even if you put another component on it, it still wouldn't catch mice. The important thing about irreducible complexity is there are many systems in the cell that have that same property. You take one component away and it's broken; it doesn't work any more.

So that's a big problem for Darwinian evolution because you can't put things like that together gradually. It seems you need intelligence or some other outside intelligent agency to put these things together.

GN: What are the main ideas behind the "intelligent design" movement?

MB: The basic idea is that by looking at features from natural systems, you can discern an intelligent agent was involved in setting up the system. A good example in the U.S. is a mountain called Mt. Rushmore.

On the face of this mountain have been carved the faces of four American presidents. If you were from another country and never heard of Mt. Rushmore, and were driving down the road when suddenly you see these faces on the mountain, you would know they were not formed by erosion, wind or any other unintelligent sources. You would know a mind was involved, some culture was out there and made that.

The same idea applies in any area of nature. Suppose you're an astronomer and you're studying the radio waves that fill the universe. Most of them are static, but you have your antennae focused, and all of a sudden you hear radio waves that are conveying a message—something like "We would like pizza, too" or "Greetings from Alpha Centauri"—then it would be dumb to ascribe those to random physical forces. You would ascribe them to intelligent space aliens.

Now if you are a biologist and you think the cell is a glob of protoplasm but you go on to investigate it and you find out that instead of being simple, it is filled with these elegant machines—machines of greater sophistication than we are capable of making—that is telling us something.

The intelligent design hypothesis says we can infer that a mind was at work *there,* too—that matter and energy and natural processes are not sufficient to explain how the cell came to be arranged that way.

GN: Is the information embedded in DNA matter, energy or something else?

MB: That's an excellent question. This harkens back to the 1960s when a physical chemist made the point explicitly that information is not matter or energy but something else. He talked about a paper with writing on it. He said the chemistry of the ink and the paper is well understood, but you cannot explain the *message* on the paper in terms of the physical properties of either the ink or the paper.

In the same way, we found information in the DNA, and the information is not in the chemical or the physical properties of DNA. It's the way the pieces of DNA, called nucleotides, are arranged in a string. Just as a string of letters in a word, a sentence or a paragraph, these give sensible information that tell the cell how to make itself.

So in the intelligent design theory, since we take it as a given that there is such a thing as intelligence, information is not matter or energy. We say, yes, there is something else in DNA, and that is the intelligence component.

GN: What do you think the situation will be like in the year 2025 for the intelligent design movement and Darwinian evolution?

MB: In the year 2025 what we view as the complexity of the genome in the cell today will be seen as child's play compared to the complexity we will have discovered in the next 20 years. As we discover more about the cell, at every turn we find it is far more sophisticated, more elegant and more complicated than we ever thought, and that trend is not decreasing.

So the things I write about that show intelligent design will look like child's play compared to what we will discover. I think the case for intelligent design will be even stronger. The problem, though, is more political than scientific. The scientific argument is easy to see, but some people have committed themselves to materialism. For intelligent design to make strong inroads into science, that will have to change.

One way things can be changed is if students and young scientists more open to intelligent design begin to choose scientific careers and make their views known. Then if a critical mass of people say they are open to the idea of intelligent design, I think Darwinism will indeed collapse.

Right now it is being held up simply by social pressure among scientists who view the world in a certain way. But if a significant group of scientists dissents from that view, then Darwinism will have to prove its case—and I don't think it can prove it. ***GN***

God's Challenge to You

During the great age of exploration, visionary men sailed uncharted waters and discovered new lands. Today God issues a great challenge to us. Are you willing to take Him up on His challenge to you?

by Les McCullough

Christopher Columbus, Sir Francis Drake, Captain James Cook. Henry Stanley finding Dr. Livingston. All these conjure up the excitement of discovery and exploration. In their time, each of these men stood on uncharted soil. In some cases they planted a flag and said something like: "I claim these lands in the name of God and His Royal Majesty King Edward (or King George or Queen Isabel) . . ."

These early explorers dedicated their lives to discovering new lands (and, they hoped, riches) and claiming them in the name of their royal sovereign. Some traveled by tiny ships into unknown waters on trips that sometimes lasted many years. They did it for God and country (although money and adventure also played a part), often with their lives in danger from savages or unknown diseases. Those were dramatic times.

Have you ever wondered what it was like back then? I have. Most people today can travel to these once-exotic places in a fraction of the time it once took. On one of many trips, I remember looking down from the aircraft and wondering what it was like in the days of those early explorers. You read of Stanley and Livingston and their struggles deep in the jungles of Africa. Africa is still mysterious. What must it have been like then?

Or in faraway Australia, what thoughts went through Captain Cook's mind when he sailed into Botany Bay back in April 1770? What must Dutch captain Willem Jansz have thought as he sailed through Australian waters 164 years earlier?

Both he and Captain Cook were thousands of miles and months away from their home waters. Who knew what awaited them in this faraway land? Whatever their circumstances or thoughts, they could never have dreamed of the ease with which we now do things that were so difficult for them.

Today we take for granted flying in mere hours distances that once took weeks and months to cover. These men were isolated from their base for months and years. We, on the other hand, in the comfort of a reclining seat, jet across continents and seas unaware of the weather beneath us!

Our homes have a talking picture box that brings in images of the things they spent lifetimes struggling to discover. The diseases they fought have been largely tamed by modern medicine. Satellites make global positioning as simple as the press of a button.

All these amazing things exist today. We are familiar with them, yet in the times of the "great explorations" they were not only impossible—they were *unimaginable.* For someone to have spoken of such things might well have brought accusations of witchcraft or blasphemy against God.

Thinking has a way of changing over time. These men had the comfort of their conviction and duty to God. Today we have less conviction, and the reality of God is in question in the minds of many. At best there is talk of a Prime Mover or First Source, but in the scientific world even that is limited to a relatively small number.

Evidence confirms the Bible

Can we know whether God is real and the Bible is His Word? In the beginning of the 19th century the authenticity of the Bible was questioned. But with the discovery and excavations of such ancient biblical cities as Babylon, Ur, Nineveh and Calah, the intellectuals of the day were amazed.

Now many of the principal cities of the Old Testament have been uncovered. Even the names of many specific individuals mentioned in the Bible have been found. Yet even with those amazing discoveries, many still doubt the validity of the Bible and the reality of God.

For many scholars, the early chapters of Genesis are mythology. The common view among them is that those chapters are only the writings of a tiny nation attempting to raise itself to a position of importance by claiming God led them. The ancient nation of Israel—and more pointedly the Jewish people—are presumed to have invented a supernatural God with tales of His intervening on their behalf in the affairs of men.

At times these men are amazed to hear announcements such as the one recently released by Israeli archaeologists Eli Shukron and Ronny Reich. In an Associated Press report of Dec. 23, 2004, they announced an incredible find—the biblical Pool of Siloam mentioned in John 9:7 and 11, buried since the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. "The moment that we revealed and discovered this four months ago," said Shukron, "we were 100 percent sure it was the Siloam Pool." (See "Archaeologists discover biblical Pool of Siloam," *The Good News,* March-April 2005, p. 16.)

In addition to its location as described in ancient documents, other verification was found in broken pottery pieces, a stone bottle cork and biblical-era coins found in the pool's structure. (If you'd like to learn more about how archaeological evidence confirms the biblical record, *The Good News* ran a 24-part series titled "The Bible and Archaeology," available for download at www.ucg.org/booklets.)

Is God real?

Some time ago, newspapers reported on a survey taken in Great Britain regarding religious beliefs. Asked "Do you believe in God?," from 60 to 75 percent of adults questioned said they did. But, as it turned out, their belief had small impact on their everyday lives. It didn't impact how they lived, where or how they worked, whether or not they cheated on taxes or lied about something.

A smaller percentage said they believed in heaven. A lesser number believed in miracles—although they often hope for one—and as few as 25 percent professed a belief in angels. A large part of the British public considered themselves nonreligious.

You may find yourself wondering whether you are convinced of the reality of God. The cold fact is, the reality of God is not determined by percentages on surveys or by majority vote.

God *is.* He *is* real. He does control the ultimate end of man. This fact doesn't depend on our believing it. Our ultimate welfare does.

Read this head-on challenge. Think about it. Nothing is in doubt here: "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there

is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9-10). Long ago specific statements were made; events were foretold and then brought about. Mankind questioning that fact doesn't change a thing.

Do we understand this statement? God says He is so powerful that He can foretell the end of a matter from the very beginning. He determines the required circumstances and brings them about.

The challenge before us is far more amazing than the challenges the early explorers faced, and it is incredibly more rewarding.

Another wonderful thing is stated just after this in verse 13. God says He will *bring His salvation.* The rest of the Bible teaches that we, each of us, can share in that promise. But what does that mean?

Salvation means *eternal life.* Can you imagine living forever in an abundant, happy existence? In the life He promises, there will be no deterioration or aging with the passing of time. There will be no limitations because of health, physical stature or gender.

Humankind struggles mightily to discover new ways to prolong life. All too often that means more months or years of declining health. God says He offers us the opportunity to live forever—not a life of failing strength, loss of hearing and sight, but an abundant, vibrant, full experience throughout time without end. What an unbelievable gift!

Are we embarrassed about religion?

Some time ago Michael Mann, a leading British publisher, had this to say about the attitudes toward religion in Britain: "As a nation, we're slightly embarrassed about [religion]. The media don't write about it, and the booksellers won't admit to the success of the spiritual section hidden up on the third floor. People are still afraid of making fools of themselves."

How sad. It applies to many in the United States as well. Afraid of appearing foolish to friends or acquaintances, many turn away from the important questions of life and concentrate on less controversial subjects.

We need to know the reality of God. His existence can be proven (request your own copy of the free booklet *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?*). Are you willing to open your mind to the possibility that there is an all-seeing, all-knowing God ruling over the affairs of men?

We should be more concerned with what God thinks than what others think. What will we say when we have to look Him in the eye?

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

The point is reiterated in Romans 14:11-12, which states: "For it is written: 'As I live, says the LORD, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each of us shall give account of himself to God."

"Do not be unbelieving"

God understands our weaknesses and lack of faith. Consider the case of the apostle Thomas, often called "doubting Thomas." He wasn't in a rush to believe the truth of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His friends couldn't convince him. "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:24-25).

Eight days later, Jesus appeared to the disciples. "Then He said to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing" (verse 27).

That is a 21st-century statement as well, one that applies to all: "Do not be unbelieving, but believing."

Jesus offered Thomas proof. He said, "Put your hand into My side." That is pretty dramatic proof that He who had been dead was alive again!

You too can have proof of God. If you are willing, you can know God exists. We can't literally put our fingers in Jesus' scars, but we have the testimony of those who were there and saw it. You can know the amazing story of things He foretold and brought to pass. You can read the real story of Jesus Christ.

You need to know God is real. He is the Creator. He is the giver of life. He is our salvation. Write for our free booklets proving these things. Remove any doubt you may have experienced and know with confidence that Jesus lives.

Are you willing to be convinced?

Of course, no one can convince you or anyone else, unless you want that conviction. To believe in the living God and His Son Jesus Christ is a major step. You must be *willing to be convinced.*

What does it take? For some, it is a dramatic answer to prayer. For someone else, it may be an intervention in a major family problem. For another, it may be having a spouse provided when it seemed impossible for such a thing to happen.

This may all involve prayer in some way. You may not believe in prayer. Don't sell it short. Pick up the challenge and simply talk with God. Some surprising thing might occur for you out of the blue.

Do you want to believe? Answers do come. As we saw earlier, a challenge was issued to unbelievers in Isaiah's day. It bears repeating: "Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:9-10).

You can research some of the things God

Continued on page 24

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God, Science and the Bible

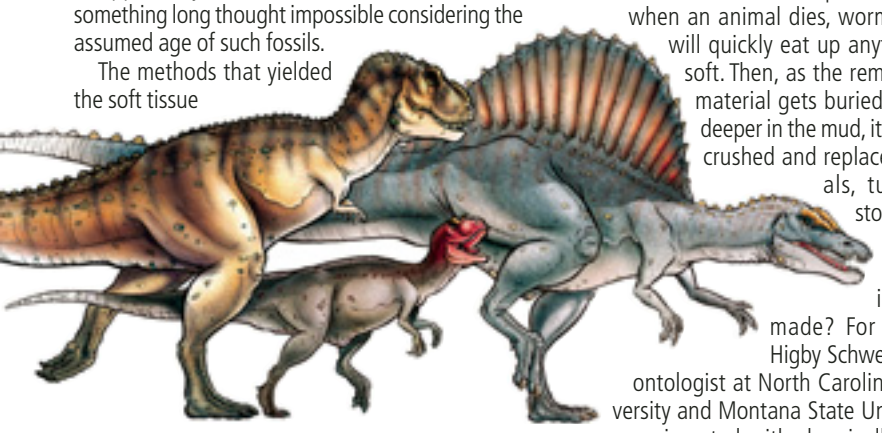
News from the world of science about God and the Bible

by Mario Seiglie, Tom Robinson and Scott Ashley

Nonfossilized soft tissue found in dinosaur bones

Dinosaur researchers the world over were stunned by the announcement in March that a 70-million-year-old tyrannosaurus rex fossilized leg bone had yielded very unfossilized soft tissue—apparently blood vessels and blood cells—something long thought impossible considering the assumed age of such fossils.

The methods that yielded the soft tissue "seem to upend accepted theories of fossilization," reported the *Chicago Tribune* March 24. "Conventional wisdom suggests that when animals like dinosaurs died millions of years ago and were covered in silty mud, inert earth minerals gradually seeped into bony tissues and replaced all organic material. The minerals transformed the bone into fossil rock, supposedly destroying any soft tissue."



***Tyrannosaurus rex** (left) shown with allosaurus and spinosaurus aegypticus.*

BBC News Online further explained: "Normally when an animal dies, worms and bugs will quickly eat up anything that is soft. Then, as the remaining bone material gets buried deeper and deeper in the mud, it gets heated, crushed and replaced by minerals, turning it to stone."

How was this amazing discovery made? For years Mary Higby Schweitzer, a paleontologist at North Carolina State University and Montana State University, had experimented with chemically dissolving the minerals in fossils—long assumed to be 100 percent mineral—to study any residue left behind.

She recently worked on a three-inch chunk of fossilized femur from a well-preserved tyrannosaurus rex recently uncovered in Montana. When she and her assistant dissolved the stone in the fossil, what they found was "stretchy bone matrix material that, when examined microscopically, seemed to show blood vessels, osteocytes, or bone building cells, and other recognizable organic features."

They repeated the experiment 17 times before they were convinced what they were seeing was indeed actual tyrannosaurus rex tissue. They continued the process with other fossils, discovering similar material in bones from two other tyrannosaurs and an 80-million-year-old hadrosaur.

"They were all preserved a little bit differently than each other, but they all contained very similar material we found in the T. rex," she reported. As a result, finding such material in dinosaur bones may "not be as rare an event as we thought."

For years paleontologists have held that organic materials such as animal remains could not be preserved beyond about 100,000 years. "We may not really know as much about how fossils are preserved as we think," says Schweitzer (Agence France-Presse, March 29). That is quite an understatement.

Regrettably, this amazing discovery doesn't seem to have prompted paleontologists to ask the obvious question: Are dating theories and methods anywhere near as reliable as scientists have assumed they are?

Scholar's fraud a **dating disaster** for Neanderthals

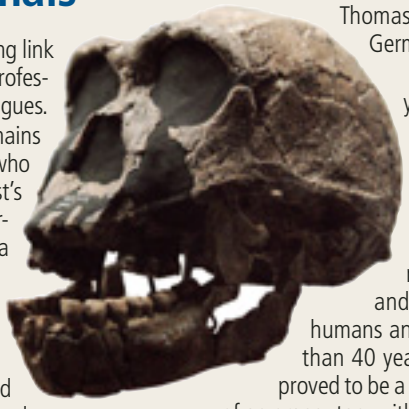
The 36,000-year-old skull fragment was the missing link between ancient Neaderthals and modern man, Professor Reiner Protsch von Zieten told his scientific colleagues.

His other remarkable discoveries included the remains of a woman who lived 21,300 years ago and a man who lived 29,400 years ago. The carbon-14 dating specialist's findings had long been considered proof that Neanderthals had lived in northern Europe and coexisted, as a separate species, with anatomically modern humans.

There was just one problem. The professor didn't know how to operate his carbon-14 dating equipment, and legitimate experts concluded that he'd simply invented the dates. The skeletal remains he had dated between 21,000 and 36,000 years old were dated by others as far younger. One of the skulls turned out to be from a man who had died barely 250 years ago—around A.D. 1750.

On Feb. 19 *The Guardian* (London) reported that the Frankfurt University professor had been forced to retire due to his many "falsehoods and manipulations" over a 30-year academic career. The scandal surfaced when he was caught attempting to sell the university's chimpanzee skull collection.

In addition to fabricating data, an investigation found that he had plagiarized the work of other scientists and passed off fake fossils as authentic ones. "It's deeply embarrassing," said Professor Ulrich Brandt, who led the investigation. "Of course the university feels very bad about this."



As a result, "anthropology is going to have to completely revise its picture of modern man between 40,000 and 10,000 years ago," said Professor Thomas Terberger of the University of Greifswald in eastern Germany, who discovered the hoax.

Why had Professor Protsch perpetrated the fraud? "If you find a skull that's more than 30,000 years old it's a sensation," explained Professor Terberger. "If you find three of them people notice you. It's good for your career. At the end of the day it was about ambition."

Regrettably, this isn't the first time such an audacious fraud has been committed in this field. The infamous "Piltdown Man," discovered in Britain in 1912 and heralded as the long-sought missing link between humans and apes, wasn't revealed as a fake until 1953—more than 40 years later. When examined carefully, "Piltdown Man" proved to be a 600-year-old human skull combined with the jawbone of an orangutan, with both parts stained to make them appear older.

Why did it take so long for the scientific establishment to realize this? Robert Foley, director of the Leverhulme Centre for Human Evolutionary Studies at Cambridge University, explains in the March 15 issue of *The Scientist:* "One of the reasons that Piltdown man was so successful was that it fitted people's expectations of what they thought early humans would look like."

Since it took 30 years to expose this latest fraud, it seems history has repeated itself. It appears that the willingness of so many to believe in evolution was a major factor in fabricated evidence being uncritically accepted for so long.

Photos/illustrations (from left): Shaun Venish, Scott Ashley, PhotoDisc

Scientists create petrified wood in a week

A team of materials scientists at a U.S. Department of Energy laboratory in south-central Washington state has discovered a way to do in days what supposedly takes nature millions of years to achieve—convert wood to mineral, forming petrified wood (*EurekAlert,* Jan. 24).

Petrifaction, as *The Harper Encyclopedia of Science* explains, is "an aspect of the mineralizing process called replacement; it is commonly associated with wood that has been replaced molecule for molecule by silica (generally opal or chalcedony).

"The petrified forests of our Western states are splendid examples. Forests were buried by ash fall from volcanic eruptions, and burial [without oxygen] prevented total decay of the wood. Later, ground water circulated through the ash, picked up silica from it, and carried it to and into the logs. There slowly the silica was deposited, replacing the wood bit by bit . . .

"The replacement is so minute that as a rule the cell structure of the wood is preserved, and even the growth rings, bark, and similar features can easily be recognized" (Vol. 3, p. 900).

This is commonly understood to involve a span of eons. "For instance, at the Ginkgo Petrified Forest, a state park on the west shore of the Columbia River in central Washington, trees were believed to have been buried without oxygen beneath molten lava millions of years ago" (Associated Press, Jan. 25).

Yet Yongsoon Shin and colleagues at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Washington, have now duplicated the process in less than a week. How?

"They gave a 1 centimeter cube of wood a two-day acid bath, soaked it in a silica solution for two more . . . air-dried it, popped it into an argon-filled furnace gradually cranked up to 1,400 degrees centigrade to cook for two hours, then let cool in argon to room temperature.

"Presto. Instant petrified wood, the silica taking up permanent residence with the carbon left in the cellulose to form a new silicon carbide, or SiC, ceramic. The material 'replicates exactly the wood architecture,' according to Shin" (*EurekAlert*).

Why is it assumed that this process must have taken ages in nature? Because it fits with evolutionary presuppositions about geologic ages marked out by slow deposits of sediment throughout a uniformitarian past in which there have been almost no cataclysmic changes over vast spans of time.

The truth is that it need not be so. As *Creation* magazine points out: "There is ample evidence that petrifaction need not take very long. Hot water rich in dissolved minerals like silica, as found in some springs at Yellowstone, has petrified a block of wood in only a year" (March-May 1999, p. 20, citing A.C. Sigleo, "Organic Chemistry of Solidified Wood," *Geochimica et Cosmochimica Acta,* 1978, Vol. 42, pp. 1397-1405).

And now we see that it can be done in a lab in a much shorter time than that.

Indeed, considering all the natural factors that have happened over even just thousands of years—volcanoes, weathering, erosion, changes in pressure and temperature, and, if you believe the Bible, the great Flood around 4,300 years ago and the tectonic upheaval that must have accompanied it—is it really so remarkable that petrified wood could have formed naturally in a much shorter span than millions of years?

Of course, petrifaction of wood may have taken long eons in some cases. We often can't know. While many creationists argue that the Bible shows the earth to be only 6,000 years old, that is not what Scripture actually states.

Most of Genesis 1 describes a period of renewing and restoring the earth's surface, which had been destroyed in an earlier calamity between verses 1 and 2. The restoration and creation of man did take place around 6,000 years ago. But the earth itself could easily be considerably older (for more information, request our free booklet *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?*).

Be that as it may, we would be wise to not accept as dogma what the scientific community claims to know concerning millions or hundreds of millions of years for various things to have transpired on the earth—as the recent laboratory experiments help to show.

We should be especially wary when "scientific" opinion appears to contradict Scripture. While it may be that the interpretation of the Bible is the problem, it could also be that the scientists do not understand as much as they think.

Smithsonian Institute upset over intelligent design article

The intelligent design movement has caused quite a stir in its aim to storm the academic citadels of evolution and replace it with an honest look at the evidence proving an intelligent Creator.

The latest notable incident occurred when Richard Sternberg, managing editor of a journal of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., allowed an article sympathetic to intelligent design to be published in its prestigious publication, *Proceedings of the Biological Society of Washington.* He was not prepared for the backlash from high-ranking evolutionists at the museum and around the world.

"I'm spending my time trying to figure out how to salvage a scientific career," Sternberg told writer David Klinghoffer in a *Wall Street Journal* article. Sternberg, who holds two Ph.D.s in biology, says that although he continues to work in the museum's department of zoology, he was expelled from his office and is being shunned by colleagues, prompting him to file a complaint with the U.S. Office of Special Counsel. He charges he is being subjected to religious discrimination.

The article in question, "The Origin of Biological Information and the Higher Taxonomic Categories," written by Stephen Meyer, a Cambridge Ph.D. in philosophy of biology, cites mainstream biologists and paleontologists from schools such as Cambridge, Oxford, Yale and the University of Chicago who are critical of some aspects of Darwinian evolution.

The article contends that supporters of Darwin's theory cannot explain how so many varied animal types suddenly sprang into existence during the short geologic period known as the Cambrian explosion. It further argues the Darwinian mechanism would require a longer time for the required genetic information to be produced, and suggests that intelligent design provides a better explanation.

"Intelligent Design, in any event," says Klinghoffer, "is hardly a made-to-order prop for any particular religion. When the British atheist philosopher Antony Flew made news this winter by declaring that he had become a deist . . . he pointed to the plausibility of Intelligent Design theory.

"Darwinism, by contrast, is an essential ingredient in secularism, that aggressive, quasi-religious faith without a deity. The Sternberg case seems, in many ways, an instance of one religion persecuting a rival, demanding loyalty from anyone who enters

"The Sternberg case seems, in many ways, an instance of one religion persecuting a rival . . ."

one of its churches—like the National Museum of Natural History" ("The Branding of a Heretic," *The Wall Street Journal,* Jan. 28).

This quote points out that Darwinism is considered a type of religion by many, with fanatical proponents ready to disparage and persecute any colleague who dares introduce another possible explanation of the origin and development of life on the earth.

It will be interesting to see the outcome of the Sternberg case, and whether it turns out to be a victory for evolutionists in their ongoing efforts to stifle discussion of alternative viewpoints as to the origin and development of life.

Where Is the Europe-U.S. Divide Leading?

Much of Europe has long chafed at the United States' global preeminence. In recent decades Europe has dreamed of a European superpower to challenge U.S. dominance—now coming to fruition in the European Union. Three recent books help explain European thinking and resentment toward the United States, and Bible prophecy shows where it will ultimately lead.

by Melvin Rhodes

After the Empire: The Breakdown of the American Order (2003) is a bestseller in France and Germany, but has received little attention in the United States. That's not surprising, given its highly negative portrayal of the United States. Nonetheless, Americans should read it to understand why many Europeans hold such negative views of the United States.

The book's author, Emmanuel Todd, is a researcher at the French National Institute for Demographic Studies in Paris.

Mr. Todd argues that "America's real war is about economics, not terrorism." He believes that the United States "is battling to maintain its status as the world's financial center by making a symbolic show of its military might in the heart of Eurasia, thereby hoping to forget and have others ignore America's industrial weakness, its financial needs and its predatory character."

Explaining how he and many others view the impact of the war on terror, Mr. Todd writes: ". . . Instead of reinforcing the image of America's global leadership as the current administration in Washington expected, its forced march into war has produced a rapid decline in the international status of the United States" (p. xviii).

"A militaristic, agitated, uncertain, anxious country"

Ironically, after the first successful truly democratic elections in modern history in Afghanistan and Iraq, and rumblings of possible significant change in Egypt, Lebanon and the Palestinian Authority, some are reluctantly admitting that perhaps Washington's current Mideast strategy is on the right track.

However, this is not the common view among the European intelligentsia. Mr. Todd believes that U.S. military efforts are actually a sign of weakness rather than of strength.

He explains: ". . . The size of the opponent chosen by the United States is the true indicator of its current power. Attacking the weak is hardly a convincing proof of one's own strength . . . The United States is pretending to remain the world's indispensable superpower by attacking insignificant adversaries.

"But this America—a militaristic, agitated, uncertain, anxious country projecting its own disorder around the globe—is hardly the 'indispensable nation' it claims to be and is certainly not what the rest of the world really needs now" (p. xviii).

When it comes to U.S. motivations, Mr. Todd overlooks a long history of evidence to the contrary. After all, the United States fought in two world wars to free Europe (and much of the rest of the world) from German military aggression. It fought smaller wars against communism in Korea and Vietnam and against suffocating dictatorships in the Gulf War, Afghanistan and Iraq. Today hundreds of millions of people in many countries enjoy freedom and prosperity as a direct result of U.S. military intervention.

In spite of the harsh and errant assessments in this book, all should give some thought to its contents. What's especially important to remember is that this is the perception that millions—not just in Europe, but also in much of the rest of the world—hold of America today.

Coming: A United States of Europe

Few Americans realize the extent to which anti-Americanism is driving efforts to unify Europe into a superpower to rival the United States.

"At the dawn of the twenty-first century, a geopolitical revolution of historic dimensions is under way across the Atlantic: the unification of Europe. Twenty-five nations have joined together—with another dozen or so on the waiting list—to build a common economy, government, and culture. Europe is a more integrated place today than at any time since the Roman Empire."

So begins the prologue to *The United States of Europe,* a new book by *Washington Post* writer T.R. Reid, formerly the *Post's* London bureau chief.

In an interview on National Public Radio's *Diane Rehm Show* in late December, Mr. Reid described the European Union as the greatest threat to American interests in the world today. He continued to explain that Europe now leads America in every respect other than military power.

The EU "has more people, more wealth, and more trade than the United States . . . It has more votes in every international organization than the United States, and it gives away more money in development aid. The result is global economic and political clout that makes the European Union exactly what its leaders want it to be: a second superpower that can stand on equal footing with the United States."

The title of his book was inspired by the late British statesman Sir Winston Churchill, who, in the aftermath of World War II, declared that the best way to avoid another major European conflict was to create a United States of Europe. Almost 60 years later, the Europeans are about to achieve that goal. A European constitution, when approved, will bring about the full union envisaged by its founders.

The euro: A weapon against the dollar

A major turning point in the rise of the European Union was the launch of the euro, now rivaling the American dollar for global financial supremacy.

"From day one, the euro had more daily users than the U.S. dollar. As the unit of exchange for a monetary zone that includes two of the world's five richest countries (Germany and France) and four of the top twelve (Germany, France, Italy and

Spain), the euro became the world's second most important currency on the day it was launched.

"But the Europeans have larger ambitions than that. The euro was specifically designed to challenge the global hegemony of the U.S. dollar as the world's preferred reserve currency and as the standard unit of exchange for international financial transactions."

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"The euro was specifically designed to challenge the global hegemony of the U.S. dollar as the world's preferred reserve currency . . ."

Mr. Reid ends this particular paragraph with a quote from British analyst Will Hutton: "With the euro, the EU now has the weapon with which to fight back" (p. 64).

The United States is helping the rise of the euro by incessant overspending and heavy borrowing. These help increase uncertainty about the United States and push down the value of the American currency. While this may arguably help the United States export more, it also has the effect of lessening confidence in the United States and boosting confidence in the European Union as a viable alternative.

European dream replacing the American dream?

The European Dream (2004) is another book on Europe, written by American author Jeremy Rifkin. Mr. Rifkin is president of the Foundation on Economic Trends in Washington, D.C., and a popular social commentator. His book is subtitled: "How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream."

For generations the world was inspired by America, and people all over the world wanted to copy many aspects of American life. Now, Mr. Rifkin argues, the European dream is replacing the American dream.

The European Union, which began with only six countries less than 50 years ago, now has 25 members, 10 of whom joined only last year. Other countries want to join. Recent revolutions in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan highlight this trend. One young man celebrating the fall of the former corrupt regime in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, told a BBC reporter, "We all want to be like Europe now."

Whereas the American dream was built on the individual accumulation of wealth, "the new European Dream is powerful because it dares to suggest a new history, with an attention to quality of life, sustainability, and peace and harmony. In a sustainable civilization, based on quality of life rather than unlimited individual accumulation of wealth, the very material basis of modern progress would be a thing of the past," writes Mr. Rifkin (p. 7).

The European dream is what was often called the Third Way, or Social Democracy, something between the American and the Soviet models of existence. Increasingly, Europeans see the United States as a failed model, just as Soviet communism was a decade or more ago.

Europeans are far more comfortable with high taxes and more intrusive government than are most Americans, and view their quasi-socialist systems as more humane and secure in the long run—even if population studies show they are clearly not sustainable in the long run.

Ironically, European prosperity under its socialist system has been provided for in large part by not having to expend large sums of government money on military protection—as the United States has provided for that. With the collapse of Soviet communism, European countries see no further need for American protection—but no need for their own major military expenditure either. This will likely change as time goes on. It remains to be seen how these dynamics will play out.

European threat to the United States

Already the EU is the greatest single market with a greater population than the United States as well as the biggest trading bloc, giving it enormous economic clout with which to challenge the United States around the world.

It is also building political muscle as well. In the run-up to the Iraq War, France showed that it wouldn't hesitate to use its UN Security Council veto to stymie the United States. We should expect to see more of the same in the coming years.

The European Union is increasingly parting ways with the United States on how to deal with such problem areas as North Korea, China and Iran, just as it has long set a different course in its dealings with much of the Middle East. It's growing ever clearer that European and U.S. interests increasingly diverge.

The EU has taken almost 50 years to get to where it is today, during which time the United States has been the leader of the free world. Militarily stretched and burdened with a national debt that continues to grow—America is borrowing from other nations at a rate unprecedented in history, $2.5 billion a day!—U.S. preeminence can no longer be taken for granted. Just as British dominance ended before it, the time may not be far off when U.S. preeminence will likewise come to an end.

As the United States replaced Britain, is Europe ready to ascend the world stage and replace America as the world's number one superpower? For the answer to that question, we should look at yet another book—the Bible.

God determines who rises and falls

The Bible reminds us that God is in charge. As Daniel 2:21 tells us, ". . . He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings."

God revealed to Daniel that in the future different empires would dominate the globe, that one power after another would rise to preeminence. Daniel himself was to live to see the fall of Babylon, which was replaced by the Medo-Persian Empire, which then enjoyed its brief period of preeminence.

The words of Daniel quoted above were spoken to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar. The king had had a dream that troubled him. He called "the magicians, the astrologers, the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans [the most learned men of Babylon] to tell the king his dreams" (Daniel 2:2). But they could not. Angry, the king threatened to have all the wise men in the land killed.

Enter Daniel. Daniel "asked the king to give him time, that he might tell the king the interpretation" (verse 16). Then follows an astounding overview of world history right down to the second coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God. Verse 44 states clearly: "And in the days of these kings [the final rulers of earth's final superpower] the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed . . ."

Nebuchadnezzar's vision was of a great image that symbolized four kingdoms, the first being Babylon itself. "After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron . . ." (verses 39-40). As noted in verse 44, this fourth kingdom is to exist at the time of God's intervention in human affairs to establish the Kingdom of God.

Parallel prophecy provides other details

Chapter 7 of Daniel is a parallel prophecy of these empires—using different symbols—that makes all this clearer.

"In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head while on his bed. Then he wrote down the dream, telling the main facts" (Daniel 7:1). Daniel then describes "four great beasts" (verse 3), gentile empires, great military powers that would have a dramatic impact on the world, including the physical descendants of Israel.

History shows that the four great powers of Daniel's vision were the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greco-Macedonian and Roman empires. Remember, Daniel had this vision "in the first year of Belshazzar," the last king of Babylon (Daniel 5:30-31). Humanly, Daniel at this time could not have known that Babylon, the superpower of its day, would fall to the Medo-Persian Empire, or that Persia would in turn fall to Greece more than 200 years later. The Roman Empire was still centuries away. God had revealed these secrets to him (Daniel 2:28).

The story line of Daniel 7, like chapter 2, continues to the coming of the Kingdom of God (Daniel 7:14). Since that Kingdom hasn't been established yet, this means that the world now is still somewhere within the timeline laid out here.

However, the United States, the dominant power today, and the British Empire, the global superpower prior to World War II, are not mentioned in Daniel's prophetic timeline. The empires mentioned are gentile (non-Israelite) empires with characteristics very different from the two Anglo-Saxon powers. (For a further explanation, request our free booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*.)

Revelation describes earth's final empire

The book of Revelation, the last book of the Bible, adds further to our understanding of past, present and future events.

In Revelation 17, we see again that the prophecy culminates in the coming Kingdom of God. In verses 12-14 we read: "The ten horns which you saw are ten kings who have received no kingdom as yet, but they receive authority for one hour as kings with the beast . . . These will make war with the Lamb [Jesus Christ], and the Lamb will overcome them . . ." This is clearly still future.

In Revelation 13 we see described a composite of the four beasts (empires) of Daniel, followed by these prophetic words: "I saw one of his heads as if it had been mortally wounded, and his deadly wound was healed. And all the world marveled and followed the beast" (verse 3).

Later we read that this "beast" will be allied with a false religious system and a popular and powerful religious figure who will greatly influence the masses and their leaders (verses 11-18; Revelation 17). All these passages help us to understand that the world still has to see a revival of this "beast" power system, an attempt to restore again the final empire Daniel foretold, the Roman Empire.

This may seem far-fetched when you consider that the Roman Empire officially fell in A.D. 476, more than 15 centuries ago. But there have been successive attempts to revive the Roman Empire throughout history, beginning with Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, Charlemagne more than two centuries later, the Holy Roman Empire that lasted a thousand years, Napoleon and, more recently, the Axis powers of Europe that caused World War II.

Mussolini proclaimed the restoration of the Roman Empire in 1922. Attempts to restore the Roman Empire have been a constant theme of world history ever since the empire in the West fell in the fifth century.

Today we see another attempt to unify Europe, this time peacefully rather than by force of arms. Founded by the Treaty of Rome in 1957, the European Union's 25 member nations met again in Rome at the end of 2004 to discuss a new European constitution that will create a European superstate.

Watch these trends!

Could this be the prophesied revived Roman Empire that will lead to the return of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God?

While the present 25-nation EU is clearly not going to be the prophesied final superpower with its 10 rulers who "give their power and authority to the beast," the modern-day successor to the ancient Roman Empire will likely evolve out of this system.

In light of these prophecies, *The Good News* has been encouraging readers for years to watch developments in Europe. We are now seeing unprecedented hostility on the part of Europeans—not to mention much of the rest of the world—toward the United States. At the same time we are seeing America face growing economic challenges—and economic power eventually dictates political and military power.

Watch the growing European-U.S. divide. It is shaping tomorrow's world right before our eyes. ***GN***

Recommended Reading

What does Bible prophecy reveal about where the world is headed? What great trends will unfold as this age of man draws to a close? To understand, you need to read our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled*. Also, to understand what the Bible foretells about the United States, Britain and the other major English-speaking nations, request your free copy of *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy*. Both booklets are yours free for the asking.

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Death of a Titan: John Paul II's Impact on Europe and the World

John Paul II lived in momentous times. He saw Eastern Europe freed from the shackles of communism and the European Union coming together to form a potential new superpower to eventually challenge the United States. He would personally impact these benchmark events.

by John Ross Schroeder

The impact of John Paul II on the last quarter of the 20th century and more was and continues to be monumental. He came to the papal throne in 1978 and almost immediately began to do, say and write more than any previous pontiff in church history.

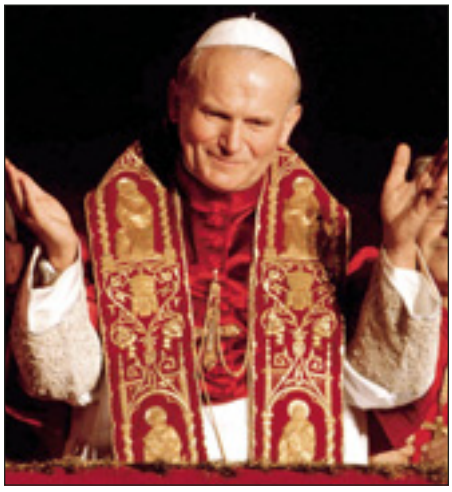
John Paul II easily became the most-traveled pope. He published more papal encyclicals than any who had previously occupied the chief chair in the Vatican. He wrote more books and appointed more cardinals. *The Times* (London) thought him the most influential *political* figure of his generation. His was a life of superlatives.

But the late pontiff once said: "They try to understand me from the outside, but I can only be understood from the inside" (John Cornwell, *The Pope in Winter,* 2004, p. xiii). Ultimately, only God can see on the inside and judge the worthiness of our lives. He is "the Judge of all" (Hebrews 12:23). Still the outward life of John Paul II is well worth careful analysis and examination.

The pope's Polish origins

The pope's philosophy of life and the nature of his papal reign were forged in Poland—a Roman Catholic country with a complex history severely troubled by Germany on the west and Russia on the east. Both nations occupied Poland during his lifetime.

As noted British historian Paul Johnson commented on the pontiff: "He had spent his manhood largely under the tyranny of the two vilest anti-life systems the world has ever seen: Nazism and Communism, together responsible for the unnatural deaths of over 120 million people in Europe and Asia. He had seen at close quarters the appalling consequences which inexorably follow when authority is directed by [a] philosophy contemptuous of life" (*The Wall Street Journal,* April 4).



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"The Pope has come to speak to the whole church, to Europe and the world, to speak about the nations and peoples so often forgotten . . . He has come to gather all these nations and peoples together with his own."

John Paul II later encouraged his fellow Poles to reject Russian communism, eventually helping to bring down the infamous Iron Curtain between east and west—and perhaps even helping to topple dictatorships beyond the borders of Europe.

The Pope in Winter put it eloquently: "A line of malevolent dictators—Marcos in the Philippines, Baby Doc in Haiti, Pinochet in Chile, Jaruzelski in Poland, Stroessner in Paraguay—fell from power after he had kissed the soil of their countries" (p. xiv).

Unflinching in purpose and promise

In May 1985 I traveled to Utrecht in the Netherlands to cover the papal visit to a country that historically had deeply resented the activities of the Roman Catholic Church. The pope knew in advance that his visit there might well reignite the embers of bitter historical antagonisms.

The Netherlands is about 40 percent Catholic, yet even many among this sizable group wanted women to be ordained, an end to church teaching on banning artificial birth control and a much more liberal attitude toward premarital sex, abortion and homosexuality—all of which John Paul II was vehemently against.

The pope came under heavy pressure in Holland, but he didn't flinch in the face of demands to alter Catholic doctrines, a pattern that was to continue throughout his papal reign—bringing him periodic criticism from many liberals of his faith.

For many decades the Catholic Church had been quiescent in Europe. The church had become a follower, not a leader of nations. But the papal reign of John Paul II was to change all that. The pontiff had a plan from the start and the Netherlands proved to be only one link in a long "Euro-chain" of events. The pope was definitely on the offensive.

Why a traveling pope?

In the early 1980s several Catholic writers produced a book titled *The Pope From Poland.* The authors said that even when the pope occupies his Vatican apartments "he is thinking of his next journey" (p. 250). He did not undertake these arduous trips solely for pastoral purposes or merely to increase his knowledge of the universal church. He always had long-range goals and purposes in mind.

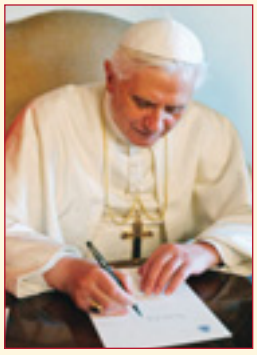
The pope pursued a vigorous *Ostpolitik* (the opening of relations with the eastern bloc) in Eastern Europe—contrary to the wishes of the former Soviet Union. It involved negotiating a complex web of relationships between the Catholic Church and the governments of these eastern nations.

John Paul II presented *"a vision of a*

Pope Benedict XVI Faces Major Challenges

Pope Benedict XVI will have large shoes to fill as he follows in the footsteps of John Paul II. And follow in them he will, as he has long been thought to be John Paul II's favorite to succeed him.

The name that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger took upon being elected supreme pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, Benedict XVI, has caused many to speculate on the form and shape his reign may take.



Benedict XV was the pope during World War I who sought to prevent the great conflict that plunged the 20th century into decades of turmoil. Will the new Benedict seek to use his office to reconcile the differing factions of our present age and prevent the emergence of another time of world conflict?

Or perhaps he chose the name in honor of St. Benedict, who in the sixth century was a major figure in the spread of Catholicism on the European continent. If so, his choice of the name may indicate that he sees defending Catholicism in Europe as a central part of his mission.

Time will tell which of these he has most in mind, or whether both play a role in his thinking. He has made public statements in support of both themes.

As a peacemaker, the 78-year-old pontiff has said he wants to continue "an open and sincere dialogue" with other religions and would devote himself to the ecumenical cause. And as a defender of the Christian faith in Europe, he has called for Europe to seek out and recover its Christian roots "if it truly wants to survive."

Balancing the two will be a challenge, especially in light of the fact that he was the prime force behind the 2000 document "Dominus Iesus" (Latin for "Jesus the Lord"), which angered Protestants, Jews, Muslims and other non-Christians who viewed with alarm its statement that the Roman Catholic Church is the only "instrument for the salvation of all humanity."

He has also angered Turks with his opposition to Turkey's proposed entry into the European Union. His opposition appears to be based more on religion than on geography. "Europe was founded not on a geography," he explained, "but on a common faith. *We have to redefine what Europe is . . .*" (emphasis added).

Papal biographer George Weigel, commenting just minutes after the first public appearance of Benedict XVI, said he expected the new pope's first priority would be the "reconversion of Europe." It is clear the church's identity and influence in Europe is waning. Not only has a modern materialistic culture sapped the spiritual focus of the continent, but it also is under great pressure from a rising Muslim population.

Look for the Catholic Church under Benedict XVI to focus on what it sees as threats to the heartland of Christian civilization and take steps to revitalize its presence and influence in Europe.

Pope John Paul II was distressed when the present European constitution failed to reference Europe's historic Christian roots. Look for the Catholic Church under Benedict XVI to focus on what it sees as threats to the heartland of Christian civilization and take steps to revitalize its presence and influence in Europe. The Roman Catholic Church has not written off Europe as dead. Their identity and future are closely bound together.

The Catholic Church has been historically wedded to the powers of Europe through various alliances and compacts. Though this relationship has been weakened in modern times, the Bible shows a point in the future when this church-state relationship will come together again. The result will be a world power unlike any seen before. We are watching history unfold before our eyes.

—Darris McNeely

wider Europe, culturally and spiritually united" (p. 250, emphasis added throughout article). The difference between John Paul II and many of his predecessors in the Vatican was that he led instead of following.

The Pope From Poland observed: "Under John Paul II, it was the Vatican which acted and governments had to respond as best they could. John Paul II's *Ostpolitik* was brisk *and potentially destabilizing* . . . John Paul II appeared to be playing poker" (pp. 251-252). Indeed, later events proved just how destabilizing it was. It took 10 years from his first trip to Poland in 1979 for the Iron Curtain to come tumbling down.

Calling for European and world unity

Some readers may remember the pope calling for a Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Ural mountain range in Russia. European unity was a continuous theme throughout the early years of his pontificate.

On a visit to Spain in 1982 the pontiff called for the unity of the whole of Europe. Then while speaking to top state officials in The Hague on May 13, 1985, he said, "The Holy See has always sought to encourage this coming together of European communities."

The Times sent one of its correspondents to Brussels to cover the pope's visit there on May 20, 1985, where he spoke to the leaders of the three main institutions of the EEC (now the European Union). Two sentences of his speech sum up what he said: "The borders set by treaties cannot limit the communication of men and nations. Europeans cannot submit themselves to the division of their continent."

Rather early in his pontificate John Paul II had stated: "The Pope has come to speak to the whole church, *to Europe and the world*, to speak about the nations and peoples so often forgotten . . . *He has come to gather all these nations and peoples together with his own*" (*The Pope From Poland,* p. 143).

Incredible words! Like Caiaphas, the first-century Jewish high priest who somewhat uncomprehendingly prophesied of Christ's death on behalf of the whole nation of Judah (John 11:49-51), the pope may not have fully grasped the eventual prophetic impact of his own words—especially when one understands key passages in the biblical book of Revelation in the light of what he said. (To understand further, please request or download our free booklets *How to Understand Prophecy* and *The Book of Revelation Unveiled.*)

Champion of the third world church

John Paul II possessed a massive global vision, extending far beyond the continent of Europe. As media commentator Michael Medved said, "He made the Catholic Church relevant again." He greatly expanded Catholic numbers and influence in the developing world—most of all in Latin America, but to a large extent in Africa and Asia as well. Non-Italian appointments to key church positions increased considerably.

His was a forward-looking pontificate in understanding that the numbers and doctrinal conservatism he favored had to come, not from an increasingly secular and doctrinally liberal Europe or even the United States, but primarily from third world countries. *The Times* stated, "European and American Christians are outnumbered by their brothers and sisters in Africa, Asia and Latin America" (April 2).

Despite considerable pressure from the Vatican, the European Union would not

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even allow the word "God" into the new constitution (now in the process of ratification by the 25 members of the EU).

After John Paul II

What will happen to the Roman Catholic Church after praise and mourning for the pope diminishes with the passage of time?

In the short term the universal church may well be headed for intensified troubles. A feature article in *USA Today* highlighted the nature of the problem: "U.S. Catholics had a conflicted yet close relationship with the last pope. But how will they react to a new man who might be less charismatic or less tolerant of their disobedience? A pope with John Paul's iron theological fist without his velvet glove?" (April 6).

American members of the Roman church have frequently been characterized as "cafeteria Catholics," with selective obedience as their hallmark. For instance, according to the Alan Guttmacher Institute, "American women who say they're Catholic have abortions at a slightly higher rate than all U.S. women" (ibid.).

And in an ominous article titled "The Next Pope Faces the Challenge of Holding [the] Catholic Church Together," the writer quotes the words of John Cornwell, author of *The Pope in Winter:* "His successor will inherit a dysfunctional Church fraught with problems . . . A progressive pope, a papal Mikhail Gorbachev, could find himself presiding over a sudden and disastrous schism as conservatives refuse to accept the authenticity of progressive reforms" (*Financial Times,* April 2-3).

Long-term prophetic events

But in the long run, crucial events concerning the Roman Catholic Church will find their prophetic fulfillment. There are prophecies in the book of Revelation about a "Beast" power led by a supremely charismatic political leader.

He will be allied to a powerful religious figure God's Word calls the False Prophet, who will work miracles by lying wonders and cause many people to proclaim allegiance to this new geopolitical power based in the heart of Europe.

On the surface it may even appear as a positive force for good, but in reality it will produce a great deal of evil in the world. All who have the courage to oppose it, including true Christians, will be ruthlessly persecuted and oppressed—even to the point of martyrdom.

John Paul II lived in momentous times. But even more momentous times lie ahead! ***GN***

Recommended Reading

The world is seeing great changes in Europe—changes that were foretold almost 2,000 years ago in your Bible. Where are these changes leading? What will they mean for you, your family and loved ones? How does religion tie into this? You need to know! Request or download your free copies of *The Book of Revelation Unveiled* and *You Can Understand Bible Prophecy.*

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download them from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Do All Churches Get Their Teaching From the Bible?

The global influence of the Roman Catholic Church, more than a billion strong, presents a number of challenges to students of the Bible.

The Good News regularly discusses popular religious beliefs maintained throughout Christendom that aren't found in the pages of the Bible and that contradict its teachings. Further, the question may be asked: How does the Roman Catholic leadership view itself in relation to the Bible?

Pope Leo XIII, in an encyclical letter dated June 20, 1894, stated: "We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty."

A Catholic newspaper, *The Catholic National,* similarly stated in July 1895: "The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ but he is Jesus Christ himself hidden under the veil of flesh."

"The Pope is not only the representative of Jesus Christ but he is Jesus Christ himself hidden under the veil of flesh."—*The Catholic National* newspaper

Accordingly, the leadership of the Catholic Church has assumed the right to change biblical teaching where it sees fit. Notice this admission from the *Saint Catherine Catholic Church Sentinel,* May 21, 1995:

"Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the Church ever did, happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. 'The Day of the Lord' (*dies domini*) was chosen, not from any direction noted in the Scriptures, but from the Church's sense of its own power . . . People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority, should logically . . . keep Saturday holy."

Note also the words of Peter Tramer, editor of *The Catholic Extension Magazine,* replying to a question addressed to Pope Pius XI, May 22, 1934: "We Catholics do not accept the Bible as the only rule of faith. Besides the Bible we have the living Church, the authority of the Church, as a rule to guide us. We say this Church, instituted by Christ to teach and guide man through life, has the right to change the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament; and hence, we accept her change of the Sabbath to Sunday.

"We frankly say, 'Yes, the Church made this change, made this law, as she made many other laws, for instance the Friday abstinence, the un-married priesthood, the laws concerning mixed marriages, the regulations of Catholic marriages, and a thousand other laws."

In addition listen to the official view of James Gibbons, cardinal and archbishop of Baltimore: "You may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we [Roman Catholics] never sanctify" (*Faith of Our Fathers,* p. 111).

This teaching, like many others, was carried over from the Catholic Church into Protestant churches after the Protestant Reformation. As the Catholic Church readily admits, this change has no basis in the Bible.

The Bible talks about another Church that Jesus Christ described as a "little flock" (Luke 12:32). The Church that Jesus built is so different that, as He warned, its members would be persecuted by the world because of their beliefs rather than gaining wide acceptance (John 15:19-20).

After the death of the apostles in the first century, their teachings were soon replaced by unbiblical doctrines that would better appeal to the broad majority of mankind.

Yet Christ and the apostles made it very clear that God's Word is the basis of all true doctrinal teaching. Jesus said, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). That is, God's Word is truth, and it is found in both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

The apostle Paul wrote that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man [or woman] of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The apostle Peter told converts to "desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). True Christians must reject any teaching proved contrary to the Word of God.

To understand more, please request or download the free booklets *The Church Jesus Built* and *Sunset to Sunset: God's Sabbath Rest.*

World News and Trends

An Overview of Conditions Around the World

by John Ross Schroeder and Jerold Aust

China: Emergence of a potential supergiant

China's growth is breathtaking. It uses about half the world's cement supplies and about a third of all steel production. Its consumer market for mobile phones is growing at an incredible rate and the number of Internet users is multiplying fast. This country of some 1.3 billion people is very thirsty for oil and gas—a significant factor in today's high fuel prices.

According to author Harriet Sargeant, "China's need for energy supplies is taking it all over the world, from Asia to Russia and even South America where it has signed trade pacts with Brazil and energy exploration deals with Argentina" (*Daily Mail,* "Unleashing the Dragon," April 12).

The United States is very concerned about China's intentions on several fronts. Some five years ago, Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice wrote: "China resents the role of the United States in [the] Asia-Pacific region" (*The Economist,* March 26). Although in her recent visit there she did not mention this problem directly, it still exists as the Asia-Pacific area has traditionally been under heavy American influence, especially since World War II.

"China's need for energy supplies is taking it all over the world, from Asia to Russia and even South America . . ."

To limit Chinese military expansion, the United States has at least temporarily persuaded the European Union *not* to remove sanctions and start sending sophisticated military hardware to this Far Eastern country. Militarily, America also worries about aggressive Chinese intentions toward Taiwan and wonders why it does not restrain the nuclear ambitions of North Korea in a more convincing fashion.

Harriet Sargeant, who has arranged for the publishing of a new book titled *Shanghai,* poses some frightening questions in her *Daily Mail* article. "Would China press the button? It's the new superpower, gobbling up the world's resources. *But in its desperate quest for energy, China is forging dangerous alliances that could push us to the brink of nuclear war . . . China's ruling elite appears to only dimly understand the forces they have unleashed"* (emphasis added).

Yet she cautions us that "this then is not a new Cold War and China is not Russia. Despite a conflict of interest, the U.S. and China depend on each other for financial success and even economic stability. China's demand stimulates world economic growth on which American prosperity depends."

Keep your eyes on China. Clearly it has become a capitalist country, but with a dictatorial communist government—a very dangerous combination in this explosive world. (Sources: *Daily Mail* [London], *The Economist.*)

How oil and gas supplies affect world politics

Columnist Andrew Sullivan of *The Sunday Times* wrote about "a looming global superpower fight between China and the US over oil supplies." He further mentioned that "a *USA Today* poll found 58% of Americans saying that higher petrol [gasoline] prices were eating into their standard of living."

These issues also affect Europe. According to *The Wall Street Journal Europe,* "Last December the International Energy Agency warned the EU that its dependence on Russian gas is putting its energy security at risk." For instance, nearly half of Germany's natural gas comes from Russia. That figure is closer to 100 percent for some Eastern European nations such as Slovakia.

Economics and politics tend to mesh together in such circumstances. The *Wall Street Journal Europe* feature article continued: "Moscow regards energy trading as a potential means of putting pressure on dependent states." Also oil and gas supplies may become a far bigger issue as the GNP of China and India grow and many Asian nations increase their standard of living and use of industrial and consumer products that require large amounts of petroleum.

Obtaining sufficient supplies of Middle East oil may yet become a major problem for the West. To understand the importance of these political and economic issues in the Middle East, request our free booklet *The Middle East in Bible Prophecy.*

Christians persecuted around the world

According to the British magazine *The Spectator,* "More than 300 million Christians are either threatened with violence or legally discriminated against because of their faith" (March 26). Across the world of Islam, Christians are suffering persecution. Some are put behind bars on false charges and even tortured in some cases. In most Muslim countries it is illegal to convert to Christianity or to try to influence others to do so.

Drew Christiansen, adviser to the U.S. Conference of Bishops, recently completed an official study which said that "all over the Middle East, Christians are under pressure. 'The Cradle of Christianity' is under enormous pressure from demographic decline, the growth of Islamic militancy, official and unofficial discrimination, the Iraq war, the Palestinian Intifada, failed peace policies and political manipulation."

Last year the Chinese closed some 100 house churches. *The American Spectator* magazine reported that "China is in the middle of a concerted central government crackdown on its unregistered (hence, in effect, underground) Chinese and Protestant churches. It is the most serious crackdown in several years" (November 2004).

Even as American soldiers, some of whom are members of church congregations back home or have Christian backgrounds, help keep order in Iraq, the country "ethnically cleanses itself of its Christian community" (*Spectator* feature article). In North Korea there are reports of Christians being used as guinea pigs in chemical warfare experiments. And in India, "Hindu attacks on Christians are increasing" (*The Catholic Times,* March 20).

"More than 300 million Christians are either threatened with violence or legally discriminated against because of their faith."

These persecutions involve, variously, violations of the rights of citizenship, violence to persons and barring of access to jobs and houses. The Bible certainly indicates that these trends are a harbinger of things to come. And never assume that persecution of Christians cannot happen in our Western democracies. For further understanding, please request or download our free booklet *The Book of Revelation Unveiled.* (Sources: *The Spectator, The Catholic Times* [both London], *The American Spectator.*)

Photos.com

The Catholic Church, China and Taiwan

In recent decades the Chinese have periodically cracked down on Christians. In recent months persecution has become very intense. There are some 12 million Roman Catholics in China normally classified as members of the so-called "patriotic" church with no relationship permitted with the Vatican.

Recent reports indicate that the Vatican may abandon Taiwan diplomatically to win Chinese support for China's Catholics. Reporting from Beijing for *The Sunday Telegraph* (April 10), Peter Goff stated that the "Church prepares [the] way for millions to worship without fear of persecution." The stark title of his article is: "Vatican Will Abandon Taiwan to Win China's Catholics."

Bishop Joseph Zen Ze-Kiun of Hong Kong is a leading adviser for the Vatican on Chinese issues. He said that "the Holy See has been thinking of giving up Taiwan. This is a difficult [decision], but it has decided to do it. If the Holy See does not establish [diplomatic] ties with China, Catholics there will not have real freedom."

Up to now the Vatican has been the only state in Europe to recognize Taiwan's sovereignty. Pope John Paul II's pontificate did not experience good relations with China primarily because of his unrelenting opposition to communism. The Vatican is apparently trying to "put this right" as soon as practically possible. (Sources: *The Wall Street Journal Europe, The Sunday Telegraph* [London].)

Clerics oppose Jerusalem gay fest

An American evangelist generated an unusual gathering of clerics from three faiths—Christianity, Islam and Judaism—to oppose an international WorldPride gay festival in Jerusalem planned for August (*The New York Times,* March 31). The festival's intent is to generate worldwide publicity for the gay-rights cause in the Holy City, home to three great religious traditions.

Israel's Sephardic chief rabbi said of the festival organizers, "They are creating a deep and terrible sorrow that is unbearable." Abdel Aziz Bukhari, a Sufi sheik, added, "We can't permit anybody to come and make the Holy City dirty." American Rabbi Yehuda Levin, of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, called the upcoming gay festival "the spiritual rape of the Holy City" (ibid.).

God certainly loves all men and women and offers all human beings the gift of eternal life. But God's Word, the Holy Bible, clearly speaks against homosexuality (Leviticus 20:13; Romans 1:27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). God is no respecter of persons; He is also against all human sins that transgress His laws. He wants repentance, not the flaunting of our sins.

The interfaith clerics got this one right; such actions are clearly disapproved of by God and His Word. Of course, such demonstrations would be wrong anywhere—not just Jerusalem. However, given the spiritual history of the city, the festival here creates a glaring contrast that should grab everyone's attention.

Indeed, that is just what it is intended to do—for disgraceful reasons. Just the thought of such a thing is utterly shameful, an affront to Bible believers everywhere. This is yet another sign of the cultural corruption growing all around us in a world increasingly hostile to God's eternal standards and values. (Source: *The New York Times.*)

Photographic proof: Planets exist outside our solar system

For decades astronomers have suspected that planets orbiting around stars are present all over the universe—not just in our own solar system. In recent years something like 150 planets have been detected indirectly by scientific measurements of movements and light emissions emanating from the affected stars.

But now "astronomers have produced what could be the first picture of a planet orbiting another star. They have photographed a reddish object apparently orbiting a star called GQ Lupi, which lies more than 400 light years from earth. If confirmed, the picture would be the first direct image of a planet outside the solar system" (*The Sunday Times,* April 10).

Discoveries of this type may have great—but as yet mostly unrealized—implications for the future of humankind. Man has a spiritual destiny and awesome potential far beyond what most people are able to imagine.

To understand the background behind this enduring human quest to somehow "reach the stars," please request our free booklets *What Is Your Destiny?* and *Who Is God?* (Source: *The Sunday Times* [London].)

EU bill 'being sped through' in Britain

While the British have focused their attention on the transition in the papacy and Prince Charles' marriage, the European Union bill (according to author Frederick Forsyth, the "foundation of the stone by stone abolition of our [British] nation state") is being sped through the House of Commons.

According to Mr. Forsyth, the leader of the House has been pulling out all the legislative stops to limit debate on this all-important issue for the British people and get the bill through the British parliament as quickly as possible. (Source: *Daily Express* [London].)

Earthquakes: Sign of the end time?

Last Dec. 26, one of the greatest oceanic earthquakes (and the tsunami it produced) killed some 200,000 people surrounding the Indian Ocean. It left another 100,000 missing and presumed dead. Remarkably, on March 28 a related aftershock measured a whopping 8.7 on the Richter scale.

More and more Christians and others, including modern media, are searching the Bible to find answers to such significant modern catastrophes. Jesus Christ gave indicators of the end time, including increased earthquake activity in different places (Matthew 24:3-8).

But the end time can also include the past nearly 2,000 years. The apostle John referred to it being "the last hour" in his day (1 John 2:18). The apostle Peter said that "the end of all things is at hand" (1 Peter 4:7). Depending on the context, the *end time* can include the past nearly 2,000 years.

By simple passage of time, we are closer to the latter days of the end time than we've ever been. In *The Good News* we regularly discuss world news in the light of prophetic signs of the end time. No one can know the exact time of Christ's return (Matthew 24:36), but we can know that earthquakes will continue to increase.

Remarkably, there will be an unprecedented worldwide earthquake that will shake the earth at the time Christ descends (Revelation 16:18-19). Earthquakes are natural phenomena that relate to the elasticity and temporality of the earth's surface. Still God uses earthquakes to get humankind's attention in hopes of turning us from our selfish ways to His unselfish service. (Source: *USA Today.*)

Read World News and Trends Every Day

With so much happening so quickly in today's world, how can you keep up? The *Good News* staff reviews dozens of news sources every day to bring you what's truly important. Visit *Current World News & Trends* at **www.ucg.org/worldnews** to find links to the most important news stories from across the globe.

Also, to get a biblical perspective on major events, visit **www.ucg.org/commentary** for a weekly commentary on the trends shaping our world—and what they mean for you.

Television Log

For additional information and the most current airing times, or to download or view programs online, visit www.gntv.org and www.TomorrowOnline.org.

Arizona
Phoenix — ch. 24, 98, Sundays 4 & 5:30 p.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.
Prescott — ch. 13, Tuesdays 1 p.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.
Prescott Valley — ch. 13, Sundays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.; Mondays 9 a.m.; Saturdays 9 a.m. & 3 p.m.
Tucson — ch. 73, 74, Sundays 8 & 10 a.m.; Saturdays 8 & 9:30 a.m.

Arkansas
Mena — ch. 19, Sundays 2 p.m.
Fayetteville — ch. 18, Sundays 12 noon; Fridays 12:30 p.m.; Saturdays 11 a.m.

California
Alamo — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Berkeley — ch. 26, Mondays 10 p.m.
Chatsworth — ch. 34, Fridays 10:30 p.m
Clayton — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Concord — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Danville — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Dublin — ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
El Cerrito — ch. 26, Mondays 10 p.m.
Eureka — ch. 10, Fridays 7 p.m.
Fortuna — ch. 10, Fridays 7 p.m.
Fremont — ch. 27, Mondays 11:30 a.m.
Hayward — ch. 28, Tuesdays 10 p.m.
Hemet — ch. 3, Fridays 3 p.m.
Hercules — ch. 26, Mondays 10 p.m.
Lafayette — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Livermore — ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Marin County — ch. 26, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Martinez — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Modesto — ch. 26, Mondays 1:30 p.m.; Thursdays 8:30 p.m.
Moraga — ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 & 9:30 p.m.
Newark — ch. 27, Mondays 11:30 a.m.
Novato — ch. 71, Tuesdays 7:30 p.m.
Orange County — ch. 3, Sundays 11 a.m. & 7:30 p.m.; ch. 6, Sundays 11:30 a.m. & 8:30 p.m.
Orinda — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Palo Cedro — DCA cable link, Thursdays 10:00 a.m.
Pasadena — ch. 56, Sundays 6 a.m. & 6 p.m.
Petaluma — ch. 26, Wednesdays 7 & 8 p.m.; Fridays 4, 8 & 10 p.m.
Pittsburg — ch. 26, Thursdays 12 midnight
Pleasant Hill — ch. 26, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
Pleasanton — ch. 26, Fridays 4 p.m.
Redding — ch. 11, Sundays 11:30 a.m.
Richmond — ch. 26, Mondays 10 p.m.
Rossmore — ch. 26, 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.
San Diego — ch. 23, Saturdays 6 a.m.
San Francisco — ch. 29, Sundays 11 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.
San Jose — ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Santa Clara — ch. 15A, Wednesdays 4:30 p.m.
Santa Rosa — ch. 72, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 3 p.m.
Sobrante — ch. 26, Mondays 10 p.m.
S. Pasadena — ch. 6, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Van Nuys — ch. 25, Saturdays 10 a.m.
Verdugo Hills — ch. 20, Fridays 9 p.m.
Walnut Creek — ch. 6, Thursdays 9:30 p.m.; 2nd and 4th Thursdays 7:30 p.m.

Connecticut
New London — ch. 24, Tuesdays 6 p.m.

Florida
Tampa — ch. 19, Sundays 5:30 p.m., Thursdays 12 noon
ch. 20, Sundays 12 noon

Illinois
Arlington Heights — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Aurora — ch. 6, 10, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Bartlett — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Bristol — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Buffalo Grove — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Chicago — ch. 36, times vary
Des Plaines — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
East St. Louis — ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Elkgrove Village — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Glenview — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Golf — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hanover Park — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Hoffman Estates — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Lincolnwood — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Montgomery — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Morton Grove — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Mt. Prospect — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Naperville — ch. 17, Sundays 10 a.m.
Niles — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
North Aurora — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Northbrook — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Oswego — ch. 6, Tuesdays 10:30 p.m.
Palatine — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Park Ridge — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Prospect Heights — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Rolling Meadows — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Romeoville — ch. 6, weekdays 6 p.m.
Schaumburg — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Skokie — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Streamwood — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wheeling — ch. 36, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.
Wilmette — ch. 19, Wednesdays 6:30 p.m.

Indiana
Bloomington — ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Elkhart — ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.
Ft. Wayne — ch. 57, Sundays 12:30 p.m.
South Bend — ch. 3, Sundays 9:30 p.m.

Iowa
Des Moines — ch. 3, Mondays 4:30 a.m.
Iowa City — ch. 18, Tuesdays 12:30 p.m.; Fridays 5:30 p.m.

Kentucky
Hopkinsville — ch. 23, Thursdays 12 noon; Saturdays 10 a.m.
Paducah — ch. 2, Tuesdays 4 p.m.; Thursdays 10 a.m.

Maryland
Frostburg — ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.
George's Creek — ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.
Keyser — ch. 19, Tuesdays 2 p.m.

Massachusetts
Cambridge — ch. 22, Sundays 10 a.m.
Shrewsbury — ch. 33, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Thursdays 7 a.m.

Michigan
Ann Arbor — ch. 17, Thursdays 4 p.m.
Grand Rapids — ch. 25, Tuesdays or Wednesdays 11 a.m.
Kalamazoo — ch. 19, Sundays 8:30 a.m.
Midland — ch. 3, Thursdays 12:30 p.m.
Portage — ch. 19, Mondays 8:30 a.m.; Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Thursdays 6:30 p.m.
Traverse City — ch. 2, Sundays 11:30 a.m.

Minnesota
Austin — ch. 6, Sundays 7 p.m.
Blaine — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Centerville — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Circle Pines — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Eagan — ch. 15, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7 p.m.
Ham Lake — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Inver Grove Hts. — ch. 15, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 7 p.m.
Lexington — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Lino Lakes — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Minneapolis — ch. 75, Mondays 6:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 1:30 a.m.
Rochester — ch. 10, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays 7:30 p.m.; Sundays 10:30 a.m.
Spring Lake Park — ch. 15, Sundays 9 a.m.
Willmar — ch. 18, Wednesdays 9:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.

Missouri
Jefferson City — ch. 3, Mondays 5 p.m.
St. Charles County — ch. 18, Saturdays 10 p.m., Sundays 8 a.m.
St. Louis — ch. 18, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.

Montana
Billings — ch. 7, Sundays 6 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.
Helena — ch. 11, Sundays 3 p.m.

New Mexico
Albuquerque — ch. 27, Saturdays 3 p.m.

New York
Brooklyn — ch. 34, 56, 67, 69, Sundays 10 a.m.
Hauppauge — ch. 20, Saturdays 7:30 a.m.
Long Island — ch. 20, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
Manhattan — ch. 56, Sundays 7 a.m.
Rochester — ch. 15, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.

North Carolina
Charlotte — ch. 21, Saturdays 2 p.m.
Greensboro — ch. 8, Sundays 10 a.m.; Saturdays 6 a.m.

North Dakota
Fargo — ch. 12, Wednesdays 5 p.m.

Ohio
Akron — ch. 23, Sundays 6:30 a.m.
Centerville — ch. 23, Fridays 2:30 a.m.
Dayton — ch. 12, Tuesdays 2 p.m.; Wednesdays 6 p.m.; Fridays 6 a.m.
ch. 23, Fridays 2:30 a.m.
Defiance — ch. 5, Sundays 11 a.m.
Enon — ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Fairborn — ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Trotwood — ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Vandalia — ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.
Xenia — ch. 23, Sundays 5:30 p.m.

Oregon
Eugene — ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 a.m.; Thursdays 12 midnight; Fridays 6 p.m.
McMinnville — ch. 11, Tuesdays 8 p.m.; Wednesdays 12 noon
Oregon City — ch. 11, Mondays 9 p.m.
Portland — ch. 21, Sundays 9 p.m.; Mondays 9 p.m.; Thursdays 8 p.m.
ch. 11, Sundays 6 p.m.
Salem — ch. 23, Sundays 12:30 & 9 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.; Thursdays 12 noon; Fridays 2 p.m.; Saturdays 11:30 a.m.
Woodburn — ch. 11, Sundays 9 a.m.

Rhode Island
Entire state — ch. 14, Sundays 8 a.m.; Fridays 10:30 a.m.

Texas
Arlington — ch. 16, Mondays 1:30 p.m.
Austin — ch. 11, Mondays 6 p.m.; Thursdays 6 p.m.
Corpus Christi — ch. 10, Sundays 5 p.m.; Mondays 3 p.m.; Thursdays 9:30 p.m.
Dallas — ch. 14B, Sundays 10 a.m.; Tuesdays 9:30 p.m.
Del Rio — ch. 19, Sundays 9 a.m.; Wednesdays 5 p.m.
El Paso — ch. 15, Mondays 1 p.m.; Saturdays 1 p.m.
Houston — ch. 17, Thursdays 12:30 p.m.
Laredo — ch. 2, Thursdays 7 p.m.
Longview — ch. 10, Wednesdays 10 p.m.; Fridays 12 noon
San Antonio — ch. 20, Sundays 8 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.

Virginia
Hampton Beach — ch. 71, 74, Sundays 10 a.m.

Washington
Bellevue — ch. 29, 77, Tuesdays 4 p.m.
Olympia — ch. 22, 29, Sundays 9 a.m.; Mondays 12 noon; Thursdays 3 p.m.; Fridays 8:30 a.m.
Seattle — ch. 29, 77, Tuesdays 4 p.m.
Spokane — ch. 14, Saturdays 5:30 p.m.
Vancouver — ch. 11, Sundays 1 p.m.; Wednesdays 12 noon; Thursdays 7 a.m.

West Virginia
Morgantown — ch. 3, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays 3 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.

Wisconsin
Beloit — ch. 12, Thursdays 6:30 p.m.
Eau Claire — ch. 11, Sundays 2 p.m.
Kenosha — ch. 14, Mondays 7:30 p.m.; Thursdays 5:30 p.m.
Madison — ch. 4, Sundays 10:30 a.m.
Milwaukee — ch. 96, Mondays 7:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 6 p.m.
Stevens Point — ch. 3, Mondays 10:30 p.m.; Tuesdays 10 a.m. & 3:30 p.m.

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Virginia
Norfolk — 850 AM, Sundays 10 a.m.

West Virginia
Wheeling — 1170 AM, Mondays 12:30 a.m.

Who Determines Right From Wrong?

Across the United States people are involved in an ongoing debate about the Ten Commandments. Court battles have been waged over displaying the Ten Commandments in schools and on government property. It's ironic that while some Christians vehemently defend the posting of the Ten Commandments, many other Christians believe that these laws have no application to modern Christianity.

by Gary Petty

American society is in the midst of a morality battle. A focal point of this struggle is the posting of the Ten Commandments in public schools and on any government property. Underneath the surface, there is a much more important issue in the Christian community than the posting of the Ten Commandments. The question really being asked is, "Are the Ten Commandments even relevant today?"

A survey done a few years ago involving people ages 15 to 35 revealed that *most people could name no more than two of the Ten Commandments.*

An *Atlantic Monthly* article reporting on the survey's respondents said that many "weren't too happy about some of the others when they were told about them. They also had clear ideas about how the commandments might be revised for modern times. Support was weak for keeping the Sabbath holy and honoring one's father and mother, but 'Thou shalt not drink and drive' and 'Thou shalt care for the environment' would have appeared on any new list of commandments put together by this group."

The group, by the way, was also asked to pick who they thought should be in charge of drawing up a new list of commandments. The number one choice? Oprah Winfrey.

Photo by Shaun Venish

***This Ten Commandments monument** on the grounds of the state capitol in Austin, Texas, is at the core of a case currently before the U.S. Supreme Court, which may decide whether such displays are banned from any government property.*

A new set of commandments?

Over the last few decades there have been various movements to create a new Ten Commandments.

Author Orion Moshe Kopelman, in his book *The Second Ten Commandments,* claims that the Ten Commandments have outlived their usefulness. He promotes commandments like "Maximize your time spent in flow and happiness" and "Act true to your inner voice and fulfill your mission."

John Leo, in *U.S. News and World Report*, speculates that if we begin to change the Ten Commandments to fit into modern ways of thinking then they might appear as:

"Thou shalt not steal, but creative work on your tax return is okay.

"Thou shalt not kill, except during any of the [pregnancy] trimesters or if the Pentagon says you must.

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods, except in the sense that our whole economic system depends on the power of envy and wanting more.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery, except if thou art unhappy or if personal fulfillment points thee toward the new secretary in thine office.

"Honor thy mother or mothers, including thy birth, adoptive, step-, surrogate or same-sex-partner mothers, and honor thy father, thy mother's sperm donor or her casual inseminator, current whereabouts unknown."

Anti-Commandments movements

A number of forces are driving our society toward seeing the Ten Commandments as outmoded and even oppressive. One is the New Age movement.

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Shirley MacLaine, a queen of New Age philosophy, promotes two modernized commandments in her book *Dancing in the Light:* "Know that you are God" and "Know that you are the universe."

Jesus Christ participated in the typical first-century Jewish debates over Old Testament law, which included the Ten Commandments. When asked to state the most important law, Jesus simply reiterated two laws from the Old Testament: Love God with all your heart, soul and mind and love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:36-39, quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18).

There are profound differences between the belief that there is a Supreme Being with knowledge of right and wrong, possessing the right to enforce His reality on His creation, and the belief that each person is a god or goddess with only his or her own thoughts and feelings to determine right from wrong.

A second type of resistance to the Ten Commandments arises from the ever-increasing secularizing of America. This movement is based on a belief that personal liberty—expressed as "Nobody can tell me how to live my life"—is the most cherished freedom.

Of course, the problem with commandments that restrict cheating on your income tax, committing adultery with your neighbor or lying to get ahead is that that they also restrict personal freedom to do whatever feels good at the moment.

A third force is found in Christianity itself. Since the early days of Catholicism, and in the relatively shorter lifetime of Protestantism, there has been a struggle in defining the relationship of God's grace to God's law. Some churches openly argue against the keeping of the Ten Commandments, saying they are unnecessary for Christians. Some major denominations have actually changed some of the Commandments. Others give lip service to them but only obey the ones they like, if even that.

Are the Ten Commandments relevant?

It is this last theological struggle that must be settled before either the New Age movement or secularism can be confronted by our nation's religious institutions. This confusion leaves most professing Christians so bewildered that they base their religious convictions on vague concepts of morality devoid of any real guidelines for conduct.

If the Ten Commandments, given by God, are valid guidelines for Christian conduct, then much of Christianity itself stands indicted by those same Ten Commandments. If Christians accept the validity of the Ten Commandments, then they must face some hard questions about their own religion.

Why have millions of people been killed in wars fought in the name of Jesus Christ? Why do Christians cheat each other, dishonor their parents or pray to statues and images in their worship of God even though this is plainly forbidden by the second of the Ten Commandments?

Let's return to John Leo of *U.S. News and World Report,* who writes: "It's possible to put together a modern, pro-impulse set of commandments based on advertising slogans—'Just do it,' 'Just be,' 'Sometimes you gotta break the rules,' 'Peel off inhibitions,' 'Find your own road.'

"The National Parenting Center asked children to suggest additional commandments. Among their ideas: 'No bombing for the heck of it,' 'Thou shalt not address people by their color' and 'No grabbing.'"

Are the Ten Commandments relevant today or can we trivialize them to the same level as "Use a good day planner to maximize your time"? Are they simply the "Ten Suggestions" the Creator wanted to pass on to His children? Are they laws that only applied to an ancient people and that have little application to modern life? If they are applicable today, what is the price we pay both individually and collectively for breaking them?

A better relationship with your Creator. A deeper relationship with Jesus Christ. A better life for individuals and society. These are why the Ten Commandments should be a more important part of your life! ***GN***

Recommended Reading

What is right and wrong? And more importantly, *why* are some things right and others wrong? Who decides? Far too many people view God's laws as arbitrary dos and don'ts, never realizing *why* God tells us to avoid certain thoughts and actions. But far from being a restrictive list of don'ts, the Ten Commandments are a positive guide that reveals how we can find peace, contentment and purpose. You need to read our booklet *The Ten Commandments.* A free copy is waiting for you!

Contact any of our offices listed on page 2, or request or download it from our Web site at

www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Challenge

Continued from page 11

prophesied and see whether they came about. Much prophecy is yet to be fulfilled, but there are many other prophecies that have been.

Ancient historians have recorded that the man Jesus Christ lived. As proved in our booklet *Jesus Christ: The Real Story,* He *was* not and *is* not a myth. The many prophecies that He would be born, live and die as a sacrifice for our sins all came to pass exactly as they were written down centuries before.

The long-ago nation of Israel was prophesied to go into captivity. It did, as many historians attest. And yet the Israelites were prophesied to become the most powerful nations on earth in the times leading up to Jesus' return. Believe it or not, the nations of the United States and the United Kingdom were spoken of in the Bible, not by those names but by the names of Manasseh and Ephraim, two of the tribes of the ancient nation of Israel. (Write for our booklet *The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy,* which explains the whole story.)

God does exist. He answers prayers—though perhaps not always as we may want, because we always *want* something but He always know what we *need.* Thus His answer may be, "No, you don't need it."

He created all things and He rules in the affairs of man. That rule may be indirect at this time. But He brings it about with a push here and a nudge there to fulfill His will. Daniel 2:21 points out that God "removes kings and raises up kings."

In the coming years, He is going to intervene. When it happens, no one will be able to deny it. The rule of the kingdom of man is coming to an end. Humanity will be taught how to have a happy, abundant, peaceful life. Humanity will learn not to hate, not to be envious, not to kill. Physical human beings will be led in treating other people as they wish everyone would treat them.

When it is all said and done, human beings will become a part of the very family of God in the eternal Kingdom of God. *You* can be a part of that Kingdom. You *should be* a part of that Kingdom. You, too, can live forever.

The challenge before us is far more amazing than the challenges the early explorers faced, and it is incredibly more rewarding.

Believe it or not! ***GN***

The Spread of Freedom: **Foretaste for the Entire World?**

In recent months we've witnessed a trend away from oppression and toward freedom in some countries. Encouraging though this is, it doesn't compare with what God has in store for the entire world!

by Don Hooser

Braveheart is the 1995 movie based on the legendary life of William Wallace (1272-1305), still regarded as Scotland's greatest hero, patriot and warrior. He inherited a family motto, *Pro Libertate* ("For Freedom"), which turned out to be prophetic. He grew up while the cruel king of England, Edward I "Longshanks," was scheming to rule Scotland.

At the time many Scottish nobles were not so noble. In their greedy rivalries for titles and lands, they sought to appease Longshanks for favor and security, frequently at the expense of their Scottish countrymen. Their example was pride over principles, lust over liberty. Freedom is rarely free, and they were unwilling to risk anything.

But Wallace, a mere commoner but a "braveheart," outraged at English oppression and fired with a vision for freedom, led a revolution that, after his death, resulted in the liberation of Scotland.

In 1305 he was betrayed, captured, sentenced and tortured to death. In the movie, Wallace (portrayed by Mel Gibson) is repeatedly offered a more merciful quick death if he will pledge allegiance to the king of England or beg for mercy. As the torturer begins to disembowel him, Wallace in agony indicates he wants to speak. But instead of muttering "mercy," he shouts out his last word with all the strength he can muster—"Freedom!"

Freedom. Human beings in all places and all times have hungered for it. Yearning to breathe free. To feel free. To live free. To see their children born free. To be free physically, financially, mentally and spiritually. Many of history's most inspiring true stories are of people struggling for liberation from bondage, captivity, tyranny or enslavement—and often achieving it.

History has been a roller coaster of subjugation and liberation of nations and peoples. We have witnessed encouraging achievements toward liberation in the last few years: Afghanistan, Ukraine, Iraq and perhaps progress in the Palestinian Authority–controlled territories. Now there are signs that Lebanon may throw off the yoke of its Syrian overlords who have occupied the country since 1976.

***Fireworks light the sky** over supporters of newly inaugurated President Viktor Yushchenko during a rally to mark his inauguration at the Independence Square in Kiev Jan. 23. Yushchenko was sworn in as president of Ukraine two months after massive protests over his loss in a fraud-plagued election plunged the ex-Soviet republic into political crisis.*

Newscom

But even so, millions of people in dozens of countries are being oppressed, persecuted, terrorized and enslaved. Imagine every person in every country being free! Our world has a long way to go before it is truly civilized.

Many people have never experienced liberty and cannot even envision it. They have been deceived with false freedoms and empty promises and propaganda. Instead of a spirit of freedom, they feel hopeless and helpless to achieve what they cannot even conceive. They are resigned to their servitude.

A book about freedom

But in this dark world the light of understanding can be found. Many great books have been written and many great speeches given about freedom. But one book is more enlightening than all others. It has had a greater impact for liberation than all other books combined. It is the set of Holy Scriptures that we know as the Bible.

Indeed, one of the themes of this Book of books is true freedom and liberty!

It is no coincidence that many of the freedom-loving founding fathers of the United States of America were strongly influenced by their respect for the Bible. The Bible emphasizes that God loves all people and takes great joy in liberating them from all types of bondage. And it foretells the thrilling time when Jesus Christ will return to earth and bring true freedom to all the world!

But for now, "the whole world is under the control of the evil one"—Satan the devil (1 John 5:19, New International Version). Satan "deceives the whole world" (Revelation 12:9), and one of the greatest bondages is deception and ignorance.

Satan infects people with lust for power and control. He is the driving influence behind human beings oppressing and enslaving one another. But individuals do have an option. By submitting to God's rule over their lives, they can escape the bondage of Satan's influence.

Both the Bible and logic make it clear, however, that freedom for human beings cannot be absolute independence. According to our Creator, we have responsibilities to God and our fellow man. "By this we know that we love the children of God,

when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome [not oppressive, not a yoke of bondage]" (1 John 5:2-3).

In fact, the Bible continually emphasizes that it is *disobedience* to God's laws that brings curses and penalties (lack of true freedom), and *obedience* that brings blessings and benefits (freedom from penalties!).

True freedom—the best freedom—is not an absence of all authority. In fact, it is through submission to God's authority that we can achieve maximum liberty. Righteous laws and God's laws in particular, together with their enforcement, *preserve and protect* freedom. James speaks of the Ten Commandments as the "perfect law of liberty" (James 1:25; 2:12).

For a nation to preserve liberty, the rule of just, equitable law is actually more important than being a *democracy.* A free country must have a constitution that promotes freedom through the rule of law—law that is applied equally to all citizens, including the leaders.

A truly free country may have democratic processes, but the laws take precedence over what the majority of citizens might want to vote for at any moment. Strangely, even in free countries, greedy people voting unwisely usually chip away at their laws and their freedoms.

When a society has a breakdown of moral character and people increasingly violate God's commandments, the nation almost always passes more and more civil statutes to protect the society. But the laws passed to restrict criminals restrict *everyone.* Less and less godly character results in less and less freedom (see 1 Timothy 1:5-11).

God spells out the only true and lasting solution: Someday worldwide freedom will be protected by God's Word being the "constitution" and His laws being "the law of the land."

Captivity and liberation

Our Creator is a God of justice and mercy. Biblical history and prophecy show how God frequently punishes the people of a nation by causing them to be taken into captivity by their enemies, and then, when they deeply repent of their sins, He blesses them by liberating them from captivity.

Many Bible prophecies reveal that at the end of this age, because of the increasing sinfulness of mankind, God will bring about an enormous captivity. Jesus Christ referred to this time as one of "great tribulation" (Matthew 24:9, 21-22).

But Christ also offers safety during that time to His true followers. "Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world . . ." (Revelation 3:10). And after that time of punishment is finished, Jesus will liberate all people from their captivity.

Israel's great story of liberation

The Exodus—the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt—ranks as one of the greatest examples of liberation and emancipation in history. It is described in great detail and referred to many times in the Bible.

This awesome sequence of events was made possible by a series of spectacular miracles plus 40 years of ongoing daily miracles. God extracted an entire nation from slavery in what at the time was the world's superpower. This stands as supreme dramatic proof of God's mercy, love and power!

At Mount Sinai, God spoke the Ten Commandments in the hearing of all the people. And how did God introduce Himself? How did He want to be known then and throughout history? "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2). And God's Fourth Commandment states that every weekly Sabbath day is a reminder of His monumental intervention in history (Deuteronomy 5:15).

Where was God taking the Israelites? To the Promised Land—"a land flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:8)—a land of freedom, peace and prosperity. God promised to give them houses, water wells, vineyards and olive trees, which meant private property and opportunity for every family (Deuteronomy 6:10-11).

The Bible relates many spiritual lessons to events of the Exodus. For one thing, the Exodus is a thorough illustration of God's process of spiritual redemption and salvation. It is a sequence of events symbolizing how God calls His followers and how they should respond, how they must escape from the "Egypt" of enslavement to their sinful life, how the crossing of the Red Sea pictures the need for water baptism, how they must go wherever and whenever God leads them, how God's people must rely on Him daily for all their physical and spiritual needs while living in a spiritual "wilderness," how God will bless them with answered prayer and miracles, and many other profound lessons.

The "Promised Land" of Canaan is a representation of life on earth after Jesus Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God. This wonderful age to come is described in Micah 4. All the world will be taught to obey God's laws (verse 2). "They shall beat their swords into plowshares" and the world will be at peace (verse 3). And "everyone shall sit under his vine and under his fig tree . . ." (verse 4).

As mentioned before, this signifies private ownership of property, the opportunity to enjoy the fruits of one's own labor and free enterprise. It will not be an economy of socialism with its accompanying heavy taxation and oppressive government.

Verse 4 continues, ". . . and no one shall make them afraid." There will be no dictators, secret police, terrorists, criminals or enemies to frighten or hurt them! What freedom and tranquility!

God's love of liberty is illustrated by His law concerning the "year of Jubilee"—every 50th year—a time when properties that had been bought and sold reverted to their original family owners (Leviticus 25:9-17). This prevented the long-term concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few to the detriment of the many. Every family was essentially given the opportunity for a fresh start every few generations.

Notice that to officially begin that year, the Israelites were to "proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all its inhabitants" (verse 10). Someday when God's government is established on the earth, there truly will be *liberty throughout all the land.*

The greatest story of liberation

What is the all-time greatest act of liberation—a feat that far surpasses even the mighty Exodus? It is the series of events that was climaxed by the *death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!* This magnanimous and magnificent self-sacrifice is the miracle that opens the door for the ultimate rescue and saving of all human beings.

The steps God took are almost too profound to put into words. God the Father and God the Son made the awesome decision that the Son would temporarily give up the freedom of His power and glory, become incarnated as a human being, experience all the usual limitations and sufferings of human life, be tormented and tortured, and die a humiliating and horrible death.

God's plan depended on the Son, while in the flesh, to live a perfectly sinless life

Some of the Freedoms God Offers Us

Consider the many wonderful freedoms God offers us:

- Freedom from spiritual ignorance and blindness (John 8:12, 47; Matthew 13:16-17).
- Freedom from the penalties of sin—eternal death and the automatic penalties in this life (John 5:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:54; Hebrews 2:9).
- Freedom from condemnation and guilt (Romans 8:1-2; Hebrews 10:22).
- Freedom from bondage and enslavement to sins and addictions (John 8:32-36; Romans 6:4-6, 12-18).
- Freedom from many health problems and other burdens as God heals us and helps us (Psalm 103:2-4; Matthew 9:35; Luke 4:18; James 5:14-16) and the strength to deal with the sufferings we must face in this life as we follow the steps of our loving Savior (1 Peter 2:21).
- Freedom to pray at any time and know that God hears us and answers (1 John 3:22; 5:14-15).
- Freedom from severe lack of needs (Psalm 23:1; Matthew 7:7-11).
- Freedom from the burden of legalism—from the burden of seeking to earn justification by one's own works as the religious Jews of Jesus' day were trying to do (Galatians 2:4; 5:1-4, 13-15).
- Increasing freedom from evil human nature as we grow spiritually (Romans 8:7-9; 7:24-25; 6:6, 16-22).
- Freedom from fear of death and other fears (1 John 4:18; Hebrews 2:14-15; Matthew 10:26, 28, 31; Psalm 23:4).
- And many other freedoms—study the Scriptures, think about it and make your own list!

to be a perfect sacrifice. Because He was God, His life would be worth more than all human beings combined. His one sacrifice would pay the death penalty for all human beings who have ever lived.

He would be resurrected from the dead to be once again glorified as God (John 17:5). He would then be the Savior (Redeemer, Liberator, Emancipator) for all mankind (*Jesus* means "God is salvation" or "God saves"!). All this happened! It is miraculous beyond words. It is love beyond words (John 3:16; John 15:13).

When God calls an individual to be His disciple, he or she receives all the benefits of Christ's sacrifice, including numerous freedoms, all summed up as God's *grace* (which is gratis—a free gift!). Grace is the full package of God's good and generous gifts, but chief among those benefits is the forgiveness of all past sins. That in turn paves the way for the gift of God's Holy Spirit, which make possible a Father-child relationship with God.

The freedoms God offers are seemingly limitless. God "desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" so they can receive glorious eternal life with Him (1 Timothy 2:4).

But God loves us so much He desires to answer our prayers and to help us with all our needs even while we are yet in this human life. When Jesus was on earth, He not only preached to the people, He spent much time listening, comforting, encouraging, helping and healing. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). He desires to give all the same blessings to those who follow Him.

The greatest freedom

God offers us many freedoms (see "Some of the Freedoms God Offers Us"). But He also offers us the ultimate freedom—the liberation from this human flesh into a glorious spirit existence! The resurrection and change from death to life—the transformation from mortality to immortality (Romans 8:11; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57; Philippians 3:21; 1 John 3:1-2)!

All who have ever lived and died will be brought to life to have their opportunity to learn God's truth and to have eternal life! (To learn how and when this will take place, request your free copy of the booklet *What Happens After Death?*)

Then all of our problems will be solved. No frail and fragile human bodies. No ills of society when the tyrannical Satan is replaced by Jesus Christ as the ruler of the world. Lives that were cut short will have new life and the freedom to live forever. We'll have the freedom and time to explore every inch of the earth, and every inch of the *universe.* We'll have the freedom to enjoy God's paradise forever!

Note these inspiring words in Romans 8:18-21: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God . . . because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Revised Standard Version).

But what must we do to attain this freedom?

It sounds ironic, but to become truly free we must surrender to God and become servants to Him. He is all-wise and all-benevolent. He knows what is best for us and will always *do* what is best for us.

And He will give us lives not just of joyous freedom, but of awesome variety. Consider how God gave Adam and Eve a park in which to use and enjoy the wonderful variety of flora and fauna. God restricted them from only one tree, but they gave in to the temptation to take the forbidden fruit. God offers us the freedom to choose from a wonderful variety of wholesome options. To be truly free, we must be willing to deny ourselves the forbidden trees. We must never choose to be independent from God.

Free at last!

On Aug. 28, 1963, civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. He began his speech by repeatedly saying, "I have a dream"—mentioning various hopes such as for racial equality, peace and freedom for all people.

In one part he said: "This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning: 'My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the Pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring!'"

He concluded by referring to a time when all people will be able to join hands and sing in the words of an old spiritual song, "Free at last, free at last. Thank God Almighty, we're free at last!"

Someday the visions of freedom-loving people will come to reality. When Jesus Christ returns to earth and liberates all mankind, there will be great celebration. All people will be free at last! Free at last! ***GN***

Recommended Reading

Would you like to learn more about how the world will finally experience true freedom? How it will be delivered from the tyranny of dictators and despots to a glorious freedom unlike anything the world has ever seen? This wonderful truth was at the heart of Jesus Christ's message—the gospel, or good news, of the Kingdom of God. To discover what that message is all about, request your free copy of *The Gospel of the Kingdom* today!

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www.gnmagazine.org/booklets

Letters From Our Readers

"Australia: An Underappreciated Nation"

I appreciated the article "Australia: An Underappreciated Nation." I have long been blessed by the freedom and opportunity that exists here "down under" and it is good to be reminded that freedom is never free. Your article also brought to mind Luke 12:48: "To whom much is given, from him much will be required." It will be interesting to see if the upcoming generation of young Aussies realizes how much they have been given not only by God, but by many of their brothers who died for their sakes, and how much they are prepared to sacrifice to keep it.

Perhaps the outward-looking focus of Australia's war efforts is a reflection of the country itself. Aussies tend to look outward to our coastlines and beyond. If we look at ourselves historically, we end up looking to Europe. If we look at ourselves financially we see Asia and the United States. It seems wherever we look, it is outside of our own world, and that is, in part, why we Australians see ourselves as part of a world community.

G.R., Queensland, Australia

"God, Science and the Bible"

Two thumbs-up on the addition of the new feature "God, Science and the Bible." This is an informative new section to an already excellent publication. *The Good News* and all of your other publications have taught me more about the Bible than I could have ever hoped to learn on my own.

W.B., Warner Robins, Georgia

The Good News

I want to thank you for your articles on "Winning the War Against the Family" and "Is America Still a Moral Nation?" Families are the building block of a healthy society, and thus healing begins with the family. If families begin to heal—truly becoming families as the Lord God wants them to be in the Bible—the whole nation will heal. And if the Ten Commandments were sincerely followed by the majority of the population, the entire nation would begin to heal.

Reader on Internet

The Good News is beautifully illustrated and the layout is excellent. In my estimation you have not only raised the bar to another level, but have sought to maintain the content and quality of the message contained in the magazine. Your articles are uncomplicated, straightforward and to the point—coming across with such clarity that they put the reader in a relaxed frame of mind, which makes it easier to retain the material.

D.C., Jamaica

I appreciate receiving *The Good News*. I am a Southern Baptist, but everything I read in your magazine certainly coincides with my beliefs. I appreciate the information you give about what's going on around the world. Of course, some will be critical of this magazine because it tells the truth.

D.M.G., Georgia

I currently live in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and am writing to thank you for publishing such a wonderful magazine. *The Good News* is undoubtedly my favorite. This scripture-based publication stands for all the biblical principles and covers crucial topics in a terrific way. My prayer is that ten thousands of people will be reached by *The Good News.*

P.S.C., Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The importance of biblical doctrine

The Good News that you so graciously make available free to thousands around the world is a very encouraging and informative magazine to Christians and their families. So permit me to strongly suggest that you would, if possible, leave out all doctrinal issues from future publications, and stick to family issues and informing readers of world events that pertain to God's prophetic Word.

T.M.I., Batesville, Arkansas

Proper biblical doctrine is the bulwark of true Christianity and makes it distinctive and effective. Without it, even the true Church would soon drift into error and confusion. The apostle Paul told Timothy that all Scripture was profitable for doctrine (2 Timothy 3:16) and instructed him to "give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Timothy 4:13). Please read the next two letters and see the effects of true biblical doctrines on people's lives.

A little over a year ago I found one of your booklets and read it with some amazement, at first thinking some of the information had to be wrong (i.e., about Christmas, Easter and what happens after death, etc.). So I started studying what the booklets put forth and time after time found that they were right. For the past year I have requested many booklets and found that what they put forth is completely supported by the Bible and historical/archaeological proofs.

Having been raised and educated in another church, I had always felt that something was missing. My reading and studying due to the Church's booklets has resulted in my having met a great pastor of your congregations here. In addition, I have also had the great privilege and joy of visiting with a local Church couple. It has also resulted in my current preparation and mentoring for baptism.

W.N.L., New Lisbon, Wisconsin

Thank you for helping me understand the Bible more than I could ever imagine. I always pray to God for wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Now that I look back, I see He has answered my prayers. I say this because He brought you into my life to understand more about what I read. Then, God turns and blesses me with knowledge of His Word.

Honestly, if it were not for you, I probably would still be wondering if God was real. My church has good people in it. However, your teachings are different in lots of ways. We do communion every fourth Sunday and since last year I am reluctant to participate not only in that, but Easter as well. I also feel the same way about Christmas and all the other pagan holidays. When I am asked to come to the pulpit and say something, I want so badly to speak on things that I have learned from the United Church of God.

L.H., Internet

We are glad to hear of your remarkable progress in looking to God and His Word for true knowledge and understanding. You mentioned communion every fourth Sunday. Our free booklet God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind *addresses this issue in an early chapter. Please let us know if we may be of further help.*

Published letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address your letters to The Good News, *Box 541027, Cincinnati, Ohio 45254, U.S.A., or e-mail gninfo@ucg.org (please be sure to include your full name, city, state or province, and country).*

Questions & Answers

Q: I am a 32-year-old mother of two and have been married for four years. I was raised pagan and have always felt that the path chosen for me was the wrong one. I want to follow the right path but do not know where to start. I am not even sure that God will want me since I have been pagan for so long. I need assistance to get on the right path. It wasn't until I received a card in the mail for *The Good News* and went to your Web site that I gained the courage to write and ask for help.

M.O., San Bernardino, California

A: We're glad to hear that our publications and Web site have encouraged you to begin asking questions about God and His right way of life.

Rest assured that our Creator is determined to give everyone an opportunity for salvation (1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Peter 3:9), regardless of their background. It is definitely not too late for you. God has called and begun working with many people who are far older than you are now, and from far worse backgrounds. Notice Jesus' attitude: "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

To begin to follow the right path in life, often the first step is to firmly prove the existence of God. Two in-depth booklets on this subject, *Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?* and *Creation or Evolution: Does It Really Matter What You Believe?,* are available free at our Web site, www.gnmagazine.org/booklets. Another important beginning task is to prove to yourself that the Bible is God's Word. *Is the Bible True?* (available free at the same Web site) addresses this important issue. These are basic questions that every person needs to address.

Another recommendation is our *Bible Study Course.* This 12-lesson course takes you systematically through all the major biblical doctrines. Still another valuable tool is our Bible Reading Program, which can be accessed at www.ucg.org/brp. You will discover that God has a plan and purpose for every human being. That includes you and your family. His awesome purpose for you is described in another free booklet, *What Is Your Destiny?*

Finally, we recommend another free publication that outlines the steps a person must take to develop a personal relationship with God. Request or download *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Q: Do people really have a choice with salvation? The rewards are great, but the standard to reach is very high and it seems that many will fail (Matthew 7:14).

Yorkshire, England

A: We should first understand that the Bible consistently presents salvation in a very positive manner. God created human beings in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27) and He gives us freedom of choice (Deuteronomy 30:19).

You mentioned that Matthew 7:14 indicates that many will fail in their quest for salvation. It reads: "Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." Since the Bible interprets the Bible, this passage should be viewed as applying during this age of man to the firstfruits of God, those few who are given an opportunity for salvation now. The "few" are the firstfruits and the "many" are those whom God isn't calling at this time.

Most don't find this narrow gate simply because *they can't.* Jesus said that no one can come to Him unless "the Father who sent Me draws him [or her]" (John 6:44, 65). Matthew 7:14 is simply telling us that only a relative few are being called now. The apostle Peter tells us that it is *the Church* that is being judged at this time (1 Peter 4:17). The members of the Church—elsewhere called "the firstfruits" of God (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23; 16:15)—have real choice during this present age.

The broad majority of human beings do not have that same opportunity or choice at this time. They will have that choice at a later time during the millennial reign of Christ and during the time of the Great White Throne Judgment that follows (Revelation 20:1-5, 11-13). Our free booklet *God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind* explains the chronology of events in much more detail. Please request or download your free copy.

The plan of salvation revealed through the biblical Holy Days highlights the important time factor. Salvation becomes available to humanity in a specified order (1 Corinthians 15:22-24)—the firstfruits of God now in this age, followed by the vast majority of people during the age to come.

God is very positive about our salvation. The apostle Paul said to the brethren at Philippi: "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you *will complete it* until the day of Jesus Christ" (Philippians 1:6, emphasis added). God has all the resources in the universe at His command to help us. Nothing is impossible for Him (Genesis 18:14), but He wants us to choose His way *voluntarily.* He will not save us against our wills.

But even for the relative few who choose to reject God's offer of salvation, their punishment will not be everlasting life in the fires of hell. The wages of sin is *death* (Romans 6:23). Our free booklet *Heaven and Hell: What Does the Bible Really Teach?* explains this biblical truth in great detail.

Focusing on the many positive passages of Scripture is essential. For instance, Jesus Christ said that His crucifixion would draw all peoples to Himself (John 12:32-33). And the apostle Paul said, "All Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26).

Paul also tells us that God *"desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4). Peter explains that "the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, *not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Of course, in all of these passages we must remember the time factor and that He is not trying to save all men, women and children in this age.

God is the ultimate victor and He will save the vast majority of mankind. For further knowledge about how you can be saved, please request or download our free booklets *The Road to Eternal Life* and *Transforming Your Life: The Process of Conversion*.

Do You Choose?

by Randy

"You can't roller-skate in a buffalo herd, but you can be happy if you've a mind to." Lines from old songs sometimes sound out of date, but the imagery is interesting. Can we really be happy if we want to?

I grew up near the world's largest American bison (buffalo) herd in the Black Hills of South Dakota. I've seen that herd in Custer State Park, but believe me, that park is no skateboard park. Buffalo bulls can be almost as cantankerous as the cows with calves. They hang out in fields of buffalo grass, not concrete or asphalt, and they leave massive hoof prints in the sand and dirt. There's no skateboarding or roller-skating there.

But enough about buffalo, because . . . you *can* be happy, if you have a mind to.

Let's consider these basic points: What true happiness is not, what true happiness is and how we can avoid misery and build the habit of happiness.

What happiness is not

Did you know that Americans consider the pursuit of happiness to be a basic human right? That is stated in one of mankind's most famous and influential documents, the U.S. Declaration of Independence, written in 1776: "We hold these Truths to be self-evident: that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness."

Unfortunately, many Americans and other people misread the Declaration and consider it their right to *be* happy, when in fact it reads, "the *Pursuit* of Happiness." The U.S. founding fathers understood the biblical principle that happiness must be pursued by personally choosing the right thoughts, right words and right actions at the right time. In short, *our happiness depends on us.*

Not everybody believes this. Some mistakenly think that others determine their happiness. This is called determinism and it comes in several flavors.

Genetic determinism blames our ancestry (like grandparents) for our unhappiness (for example, a hot temper and the misery it spreads).

Psychological determinism blames our parents for our lack of happiness because they failed to praise us enough, or whatever.

Environmental determinism blames someone or something in our surroundings, like friends, enemies, teachers, bosses, telemarketers, the economic situation, the nation's policies, our malfunctioning computer, etc.

Determinists are wrong. Happy genes might make it easier for us to be happy, but tempers need to be controlled and our energy focused productively. A great dad and mom are wonderful, but derelict parents are just an obstacle to rise above. All the folks and things we have to deal with every day only increase or decrease the challenge of the pursuit.

Happiness doesn't come from the acquisition of money or things. Jesus Christ once said: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15).

Lots of young people think promiscuous sex will make them happy. They don't use the word "promiscuous," of course, because they have sex for "love" or "fun." But does it make them happy? Does testing positive for herpes, the HIV virus or other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) make people happy? Does dealing with a broken heart because a selfish boyfriend or girlfriend used you and trashed you make you happy? Does waking up half-stoned and hung over in somebody else's bed make you happy?

Others chase happiness with drugs and booze. You're young, you're bright—think about it. Does waking up on the dorm floor in a dazed hangover with your face glued down by your own foul-smelling vomit make you happy? Does coming to from a drunken stupor and not having a clue what you did make you happy?

"No," they say, "it makes me happy *when* I'm drunk. Everybody likes me and thinks I'm attractive when I'm high or have too much to drink. That's why it's called happy hour!" Get a life. You're not happy.

Will you learn the meaning of life when you're stoned or out of your mind on drugs or alcohol? No way.

The ancient professor of wisdom from the 50s (the 950s B.C., that is) was a much better teacher. "Keep your heart [mind, thinking ability and feelings] with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life [including true happiness]" (Proverbs 4:23).

And what is true happiness?

Happiness is one of the most elusive butterflies ever pursued. The fact is, happy people know that they are happy and that happiness is learned. It is a state of mind and peace of mind.

The English surname *Lovejoy* fascinates me. It comes from the Bible and is a combination of the first two of a list of the qualities defining the divine character, also called the "fruit of the Spirit." Love is the most important quality, so much so that the Bible says, "God is love" (1 John 4:8, 16). But isn't it great that God put joy next on the list?

Joy is true happiness. So what exactly is joy?

Joy plunges much deeper than just a feeling or emotion of upbeat, positive thinking. It is a conviction. Joy has a critical ingredient—the next divine character trait on the list: peace (Galatians 5:22-23). We have peace with God because we love and obey Him. We have peace with others because we're genuinely concerned for them. We have peace of mind within, knowing that even when we feel friendless, God loves us and is working to include us in His grand future.

To build the habit of happiness, we must have inner joy and peace of mind in our lives.

A key word inspired in Scripture that translates as "happy" is "blessed." So happiness is to be blessed by God. No matter what happens in our lives, we have life, air to breathe, food to eat, some family and some friends, a measure of health, a measure of wealth, opportunity to learn and grow, and an incredible future

Illustration by Shaun Venish

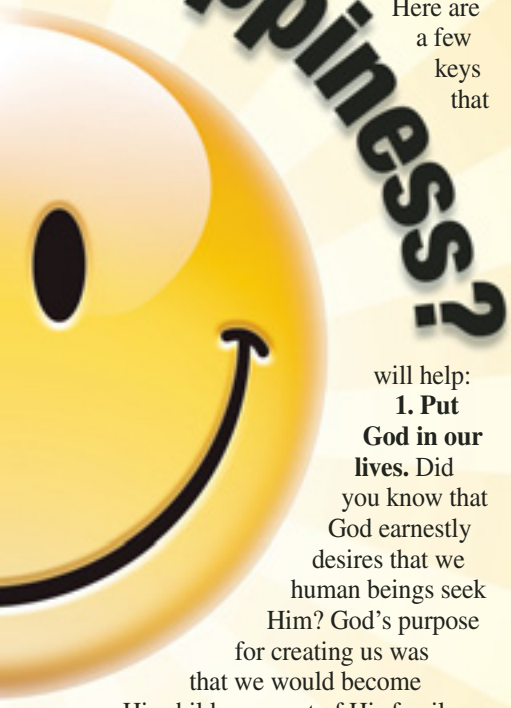
in God's family. With all these, we should be happy!

How to make happiness a habit

We can find all kinds of ideas about how to be happier in other magazines and books. Some of them may help someone find a certain measure of contentment, but it takes some straight-up, vertical thinking to find and maintain true, spiritual happiness. Here are a few keys that will help:

e Happiness?

y Stiver



1. Put God in our lives. Did you know that God earnestly desires that we human beings seek Him? God's purpose for creating us was that we would become His children—part of His family (John 1:12).

To know and worship God makes us happy—we are doing what we were made to do. "Happy is the man who is always reverent . . ." (Proverbs 28:14). To revere God, we need to pray and read our Bibles on a regular basis.

When we put God in our lives, we build real faith—a rock-solid, honest and trust-filled relationship with Him. As Proverbs 16:20 says, "Whoever trusts in the LORD, happy is he." We can read "blessed" for "happy," as it means the same. To think "blessed," however, also makes us think thankful, honored, loved, understood, humbled, safe and contented to the max!

2. Obey God's law. We have to study all the laws of mathematics, physics and chemistry in school. Guess who made those laws? That's right. Now do you think God would make His finest and best creation—humanity—without creating laws of human conduct that produce true happiness? Of course not.

The psychobabblers who tell us that there are no absolutes (absolute laws, that is)—or that each person has his or her own "truth"—haven't got a clue. They are the blind leading the blind. Remember, as a vertical thinker, you're not blind.

The proverb says, "Happy is he who keeps the law" (Proverbs 29:18). How does that work? Consider God's law about sex. God says not to have sex before marriage or outside of it (1 Corinthians 6:18; Exodus 20:14). The law says that sex is sacred within marriage and is sin with anyone else at any other time. In one fell swoop that wipes out tons of unhappy broken hearts, the misery of STDs and the gut-gnawing, guilty conscience.

To keep the law means to love God above all things and, as Jesus said, to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). All good happiness experts point out that a major key to the happiness habit is to look outward toward others. We take our minds off ourselves and our problems as we lend a hand to help, serve and encourage other people. When we stop thinking about our own selves so much, our spirits rise, the clouds part and the sun shines beautifully on our faces.

3. There is hope. Happiness thrives on the future. God has planned a beautiful future to share with you, me and everybody who chooses to be in it. That future is called the Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ will soon bring to this planet at His second coming.

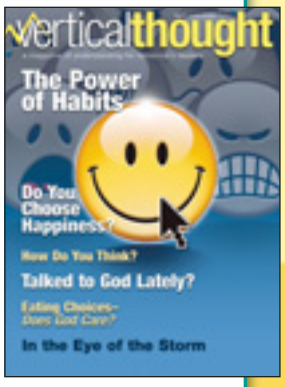
To know that you have exciting potential, opportunity and possibilities is the road to happiness. Contrast it to the despair of no hope, no options, only more misery that so many face in this sad world today. This aspect of happiness helps us remain realistically optimistic. It gives us practical confidence that we can get up and do great things. It fills us with hope. "For surely there is a hereafter, and your hope will not be cut off," says Proverbs 23:18.

So let's build our own thankful list, stay hopeful and do the right thing before God and man, because that's what will make us happy.

These are the three basic, vertical points of building the happiness habit in our lives because they all point to our loving and happy Creator. Any "keys" to happiness we hear elsewhere must come under these principles or they are of no more value than trying to roller-skate in a buffalo herd. ***GN***

Want to Learn More?

If you like reading our articles for teens and young adults in *The Good News,* be sure to take a look at our new magazine, *Vertical Thought,* at **www.verticalthought.org**.



This magazine is specially written for our younger *Good News* audience. Each issue is packed with helpful insight and eye-opening articles to help today's young adults get the most out of life—both now and in the future.

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How Can You Make Sense of the News?

So much is happening in the world, and so quickly, that it's almost impossible to sort it all out.

Where are today's dramatic and dangerous trends taking us? What does Bible prophecy reveal about our future? Is prophecy coming to pass before our eyes? How can you know the answers?

You're probably very concerned with the direction the world is heading. So are we. That's why we've created the *World News & Prophecy* Web site—to help you understand the news in the light of Bible prophecy.

This eye-opening site offers you a perspective you won't find anywhere else—the perspective of God's Word, the Bible. Here's some of what you'll find:

- Articles analyzing world news in the light of Bible prophecy.
- An online blog discussing the latest news and trends.
- Audio discussion (podcasts) of what's happening in the world around us.
- Links to significant news items from hundreds of news sources around the world.
- Free booklets to help you better understand Bible prophecy.

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